

March
2008

ANIMATION MAGAZINE™



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The Spiderwick
Chronicles

†
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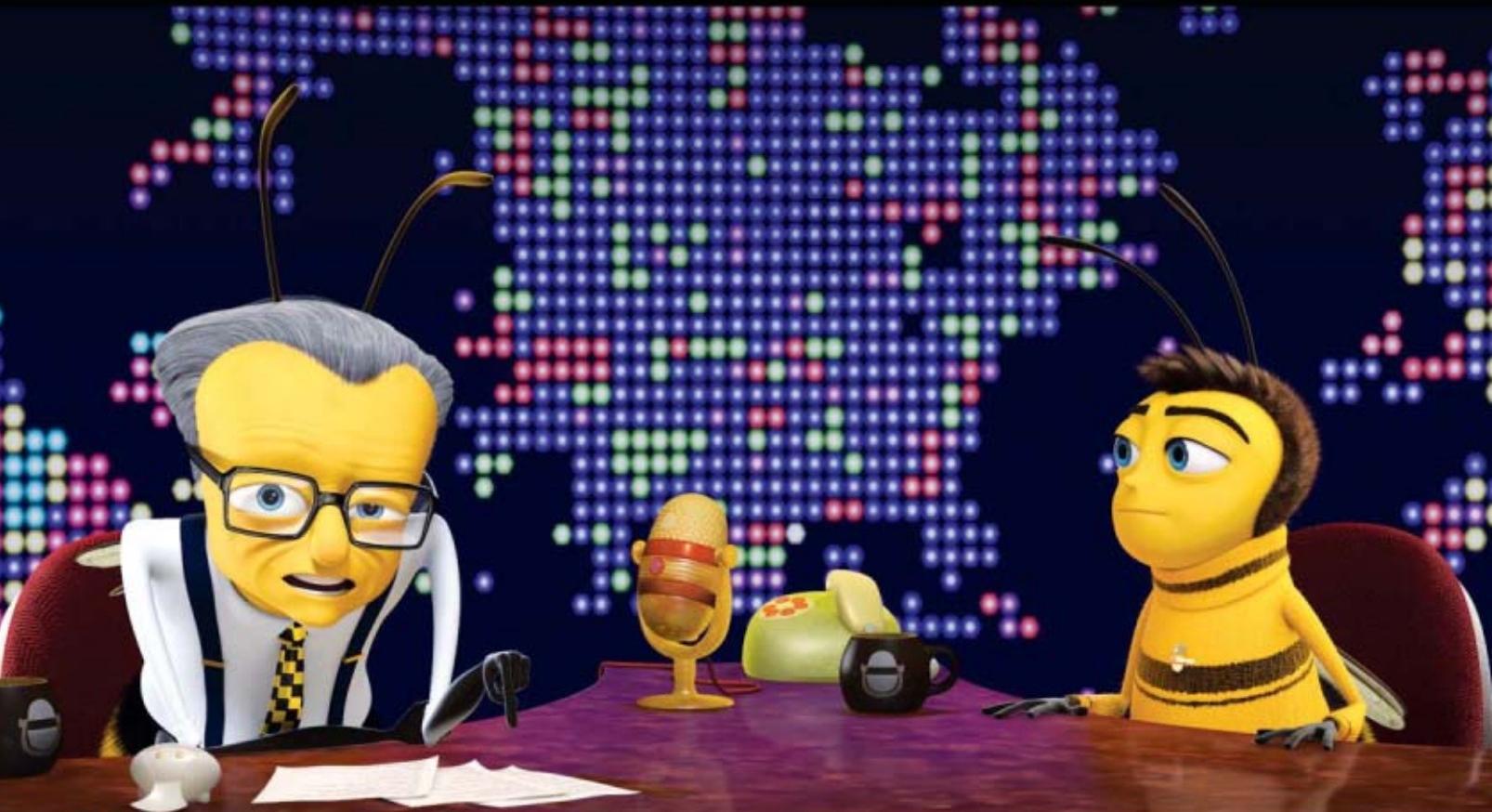
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Peter Travers – Rolling Stone



BeeNN BARRY BENSON SAYS: "THERE'S QUOTES ALONG THE BOTTOM FROM THE GUES

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Produced by: Jerry Seinfeld – Christina Steinberg



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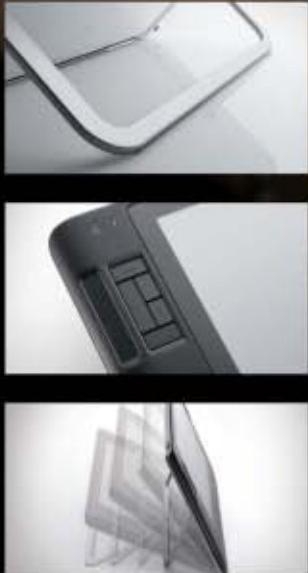


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3 ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINATIONS

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

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SPECIAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR: JOHN FRAZIER

ANIMATION SUPERVISOR: SCOTT BENZA

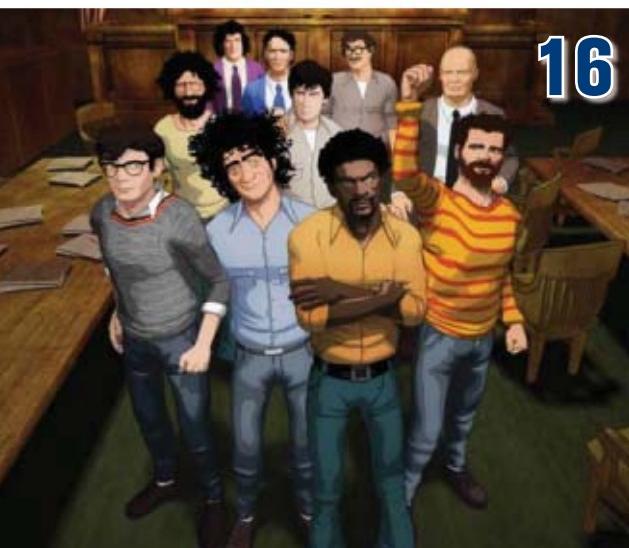
ASSOCIATE VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR: RUSSELL EARL

"TALK ABOUT GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH."

ELIZABETH WEITZMAN – NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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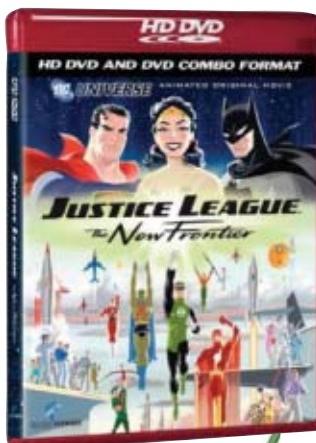
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GDC Cover: Image Meterics



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Correction: In last month's issue, an article about ADC's project Action Dad erroneously referred to the property's creators Tom Hodges and Terri Fontana-Hodges as DC Comics veterans. Hodges wrote to let us know that neither he nor his wife have worked at DC Comics. Hodges is known for his work with Lucasfilm and Star Wars projects.



A funny thing happened on the way to the Oscars. They decided to give out all the animated shorts nominations to non-Americans this year! As much as we love the five chosen projects—Josh Raskin's *I Met the Walrus*, Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski's *Madam Tutli-Putli*, Samuel Tourneux and Simon Vanesse's *Même Les Pigeons Vont Au Paradis* (Even Pigeons Go to Heaven), Alexander Petrov's *Moya Lyubov* (My Love) and Suzie Templeton's *Prokofiev's Peter & the Wolf*—there's a big giant pink elephant in the voting room. What happened to all the cool U.S.-produced shorts all of us saw this year?

Second-guessing the Academy's nominating sub-groups is a task better left to wiser people, but I'm sure there were a lot of strong toons that didn't have a chance to compete because their producers couldn't afford the screening costs or were the victims of studio politics. I know animation fans who are still fuming about the fact that the wonderful Goofy short *How to Hook Up Your Home Theater* (directed by Kevin Deters and Stevie Wermers) wasn't screened with its natural partner *Enchanted* in theaters. And you'd think Luis Cook's wonderfully eccentric and original short *The Pearce Sisters* would get some sort of attention after sweeping awards at all the possible international festivals all year long! Make sure you read Ellen Wolff's wonderfully researched piece about the short race and the five toons that did make the cut in this issue.

Most of the people we know were delighted that Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud's brave and personal *Persepolis* received a Best Animated Feature nomination. It felt as if our favorite poor schoolyard victim (2D-animated, personal, artistically valid movie) got to stand up to the big annoying bully (your average studio-produced committee-approved \$150 million movie!). Yeah, buddy, sometimes it pays not to have any smart-alecky animal sidekicks in your movie! As Satrapi said in the nomination stories in the trades that day, "You have to make it personal ... No matter where you come from, it has to be an individual story. Making it in live action would be a big mistake!"

We'll let the Vegas odd-makers and entertainment shows' omnipresent Oscar experts figure out how Homer and his Spiderpig got left behind by the trophy truck. You can just see our fave Simpson dad running over to Moe's to drown his sorrows over a pitcher (or 10) of Duff beer. Beaten by an epicurian rat, surfing penguins and a black-and-white punk rock-loving Iranian girl! You have to admit: It would have been fun to have Groening's dysfunctional family wreak havoc all over the glitzy Kodak Theater on Oscar night.

Regardless, as an industry observer pointed out recently, "Listen, nobody even remembers who took home the award in six month's time. The most important part of all this hoopla is that people start talking about animation and have passionate conversation about animators and their work. You can leave all the rest of the hype to Mary Hart and Marisa Tomei!"

And don't forget, if you're fuming about the Oscars, there's always the wonderful event known as the Annies. Now those guys know how to honor everyone. They even handed out a nomination to poor, misunderstood Beowulf!

Ramin Zahed
Editor-in-Chief
rzahed@animationmagazine.net



Shut-Outs: From top, *The Pearce Sisters*, *The Simpsons Movie* and *How to Hook Up Your Home Theater* didn't receive Oscar noms.

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Quote of the Month

"The Smurfs and UNICEF have a lot of values in common—values about joy, happiness and respect. We also have in common the fact that we are dedicated to the cause of children and to the promotion of every child and the right of every child to survive."



—UNICEF Belgium's Yves Willemont discussing the new Smurfs' campaign to promote children's rights and education worldwide in The New York Times. Peyo's happy blue villagers turn 50 this year.



2 ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINATIONS

BEST MAKEUP

Ve Neill, Martin Samuel

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

John Knoll, Hal Hickel, Charles Gibson, John Frazier



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

PIRATES *of the* **CARIBBEAN**
AT WORLD'S END

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The Animation Planner

March

<p>4 It's a big day for classic 2D animation fans as <i>101 Dalmatians (Two-Disc Platinum Ed.)</i>, <i>The Pebble and the Penguin: Family Fun Edition</i> and <i>The Secret of NIMH</i> all arrive in brand new DVD editions in stores.</p>	<p>5-7 A healthy selection of upcoming animated movies will be up for grabs at the 10th edition of <i>Cartoon Movie</i> in beautiful Potsdam/Babelsberg, Germany (www.cartoon-media.be).</p>	<p>7 A young mammoth hunter travels to uncharted territories in Roland Emmerich's vfx-laden epic, <i>10,000 B.C.</i>, which opens in theaters today.</p>		<p>7-11 The 2008 South by Southwest Interactive Festival draws new tech creative types to the awesome city of Austin, TX (www.sxsw.com/interactive).</p>
<p>11 Get ready for the deluge of toon releases in stores today—among them: <i>Fantastic Four: World's Greatest Heroes, Vol. 3</i>; <i>Lil' Bush: Resident of the United States, Season 1</i>; <i>South Park: The Imaginationland Trilogy</i> and <i>Tom and Jerry Tales, Vol. 4</i>.</p>	<p>13 The whole spectrum of contempo animation production in the U.K. is recognized in different categories at the London-based biannual <i>British Animation Awards</i> (www.britishanimationawards.com).</p>	<p>13-16 Brush up on your knowledge of Greek and ozu at the <i>3rd Athens Animfest</i> celebration (www.animationcenter.gr).</p>	<p>14 Blue Sky directors Jimmy Hayward and Steve Martino bring the Dr. Seuss classic to CG life in <i>Horton Hears a Who!</i>, voiced by Jim Carrey and Steve Carell.</p>	
<p>15 Spice up your weekend by picking up any of the three new DVD versions of <i>Appleseed Ex Machina</i> that came out this week!</p>	<p>18 You can certainly put some animated magic in your life today as Disney releases <i>Enchanted</i> on DVD. Also out today are kiddie TV toon packages <i>FARMkids: Chaos in the Country</i> and <i>Go Diego Go! Moonlight Rescue</i>.</p>	<p>25 [adult swim] series <i>Frisky Dingo: Season One</i> arrives on DVD today. Also in stores are two new volumes of the children's show, <i>It's a Big Big World</i>, featuring lovable, furry Snook the Sloth and his pals that live on World Tree.</p>		<p>25-27 Mumbai, India, is the toon place to be this week as the city hosts the <i>FICCI-Frames</i> global media and entertainment confab (www.ficci-frames.com).</p>
<p>27-30 Shouldn't you really be in Rome this week as the historic Italian city hosts its <i>Cortoons 2008 International Short Animated Films Festival</i> (www.cortoons.it)?</p>			<p>28 Are you brave enough to check out <i>Superhero!</i>, a new genre spoof by director Craig Mazin, with Brent Spiner, Leslie Nielsen and Christopher McDonald?</p>	<p>31-April 3 Mix business with literary pleasures at the <i>Bologna Children's Book Fair</i> and find the next big sensation and animation property (www.bookfair.bolognafiere.it).</p>

To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail mercedes@animationmagazine.net.

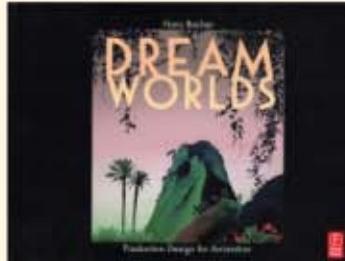
Books We Love



Dream Worlds: Production Design for Animation

By Hans Bacher (Focal Press, \$39.95)

Those in need of animation inspiration this year may find no better book than the delightful collection by Hans Bacher, one of the go-to guys at Disney for the past two decades. As Don Hahn (*Beauty and the Beast, The Lion King*) writes in the book's forward, Bacher is the kind of artist everyone wants to get in early in pre-production. "You could build an entire film on the shoulders of his inspiring visual development work," notes Hahn. And after looking at his wonderful examples of his work for movies such as *Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, Hercules, Mulan, Lilo and Stitch* and *Brother Bear*—all of which are generously represented in the book, you'll definitely know why. Another reason to cherish this volume is the helpful (and opinionated) advice he's included with the visuals. Bacher devotes chapters on where he finds inspiration, camera rules, composition,



Hans Bacher



The Lion King design work.

staging and formats, rhythm and style, value and color, and revisits *Bambi* to illustrate his views. The book also offers huge thrills for real animation fanatics as it goes behind the scenes of some of the modern masterpieces of the past 20 years as well as some of the projects that Bacher worked on that never saw the light of day. In a way, it kind of makes you wish that all of this extraordinary artist's visions will come to fruition in one form or another. Toon studios and educational outfits would be wise to make *Dream Worlds* required reading for all their staff and students in the years to come.

—Ramin Zahed

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Catching the New Euro Wave

American fare such as *Shrek the Third* and *The Simpsons Movie* were some of 2007's biggest box office draws. However, the European animation scene is bubbling with hot new features in development and in production. Those who are lucky enough to attend the 10th edition of **Cartoon Movie** in the Germany's historic Potsdam/Babelsberg (March 5-7) can see a sneak preview of some of the coolest Euro-movies at various stages of development. And if the variety and number of high-quality projects on display at this event is any indication, American studios and production entities should sit up and take notice.

Among the hot completed titles premiering at the event this year are *Donkey Xote* (Filmax's offbeat CG-animated take on the Spanish masterpiece *Don Quixote*), *Dragon Hunters* (the feature version of Futurikon's global hit series) and *The Three Robbers*, a beautifully animated 2D offering from Germany's AnimationX, based on the work of author-illustrator-artist

Tomi Ungerer. In addition, there are also eight features in the "in production" sidebar, 12 movies in development and 16 titles presented in concept stage.

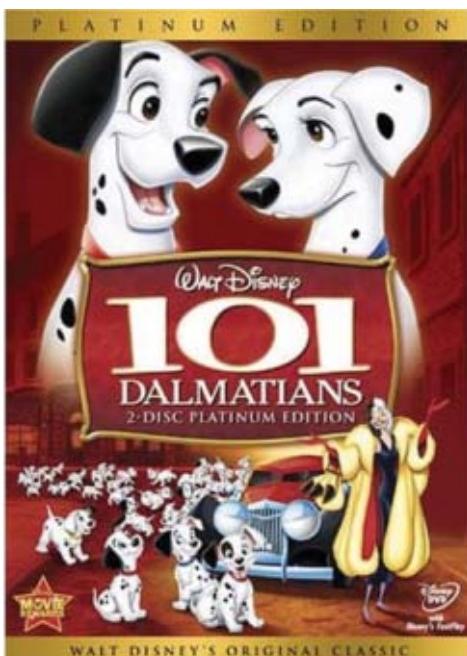
Designed as a co-production forum where European producers and financial agencies iron out the details of funding for their feature-length projects, the event has been showing positive signs of growth. As Cartoon Movie's general director Marc Vandeweyer says, "With cinema going digital, European animation is strengthening its position in the market place and with the arrival of new players with new platform, Cartoon Movie will increase the funding opportunities for producer."

For more info about the event, visit www.cartoon-media.be.

Reeling in Europe: Filmax's *Donkey Xote*, Futurikon's *Dragon Hunters* and Animation-X's *The Three Robbers* are three of the eagerly awaited European features unspooling at Cartoon Movie this year.



Tail-Wagging Adventure



Both dog lovers and fans of Disney's 1961 classic *101 Dalmatians* get a special treat this month with the release of a two-disc Platinum Edition DVD of the movie. Directed by the top-notch team of Wolfgang Reitherman, Hamilton Luske and Clyde Geronimi, the movie cost only \$4 million (a miracle by today's standards!) and gave the studio a much-needed shot in the arm with its cool, jazzy feel and contemporary designs. Of course, any Mouse House fan will tell you that this was the first movie to solely use the Xerox process for transferring the animators' drawing to cels.

The new release offers enhanced picture and sound quality and all kinds of howl-worthy bonuses, including deleted songs, behind-the-scenes docus and a special peek into the personal correspondences between Walt Disney and *Dalmatians* author Dodie Smith. There's also a wonderful interview with animation legend Marc Davis in which he talks about the creation of the film's unforgettable villainess, Cruella De Vil ("If she doesn't scare you, no evil thing will," as the famous lyric in Mel Leven's song explains!). The DVD's Virtual Dalmatian feature lets you play with Pongo and Perdita and all the puppies, and the Puppy Profiler helps you find out which puppy matches your own personality. Did we mention there's even 101 Pop-Up Trivia Facts on the menu? Something tells us a lot of folks are going to be seeing spots all month long!

Disney's 101 Dalmatians: 2-Disc Platinum Edition (\$29.99) hits stores on March 4.

Gaming After The Rock Invasion

GDC Offers a look at what's next in game development

by Ryan Ball

Not long ago, "next-gen" was the buzz word and everyone was looking forward to mind-blowing graphics that would further blur the line between interactive entertainment and cinema. Since then, there has been a significant shift in the industry and polygon counts and realistic animation seem less important than the way games are being played. Take Activision's *Guitar Hero III* and *Rock Band* from developer Harmonix. The titles were among the top sellers of the holiday season despite the lack of elaborate pre-rendered cinematics, snappy dialogue and heroic characters. Do they represent the future of gaming? Time will tell. What is clear is that these games are part of a new trend that is bringing a wider audience to the game console, and causing other developers to stand up and take notice. This year's Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Francisco will serve as a good barometer for where the art of the video game is heading for 2008 and beyond.

Another big seller of late has been Nintendo's Wii console, which also allows players to engage with games in a more intuitive way. The machine plays most of the top action titles aimed at core gamers, but it also offers games like *Wii Sports*, which are much simpler in design and can be

Nintendo's Wii console and *Wii Fit*.



enjoyed by the whole family, including Gramps and Granny. Nintendo will present a GDC discussion on *Wii Fit*, a program appealing to people who are interested in incorporating video games into their fitness routines.

A lot of these electronic diversions fall into the casual games category, a segment of the market that has been exploding over the past couple of years and is now a multi-billion dollar industry unto itself. The majority of casual games are played online on PCs, but the console may be where they really shine in the next few years.

Attendees are sure to see a lot of new causal games at GDC, but it will also be interesting to see how developers of core games are responding to the competition. GDC exec director Jamil Moledina says one thing they're tracking closely this

year is what he calls the "casualization" of games, which involves a broadening of the market and simplification of input systems to make games more accessible to a wider audience.

"What we're seeing at GDC is a move toward more direct contribution from gamers, in terms of what was traditionally only the domain of developers," Moledina notes. "Indie developers, developers, site publishers and execs at publishers are all looking at the phenomenon of YouTube, Facebook and MySpace, and are thinking, 'Wait a minute, we're the game industry. We're supposed to be the ex-

HOVR mobile games

perts in user interface.' So everyone's been cooking on this a bit."

Sulake Corp.'s social networking and gaming site, *Habbo*, is one of the leaders in this movement toward more social gaming

where the users have a hand in creating their world, but it's not exactly a new concept. Sid Meier has been doing it for more than 20 years with his *Civilization* series of strategy games. What *Habbo* has done is repackaged the idea to capture the imagination of the MySpace crowd, a demographic other game makers are looking to tap into. Meier will be interviewed at GDC about his pioneering work in attracting gamers beyond the core demographic.

"There's a strong kind of move toward creating experiences that go beyond what we traditionally call 'games,' but can involve peripherals and different



Jamil Moledina

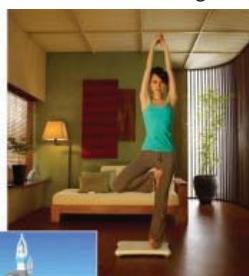
types of design structures, and we have a lot of talks on this," Moledina states, referring to the GDC '08 schedule. Game peripherals garnered a lot of attention at last year's conference, and there are sure to be

plenty more toys to play with this year as innovative companies vie to introduce the next must-have gaming device. Half the fun of *Guitar Hero* is slinging that plastic axe over your shoulder and striking your best rock star stance. Imagine hefting a gun to play *Halo 4*, perhaps with one of TN Games' ForceWear vests, which let you feel bullet hits, so to speak. The experience would be much more fun and accessible than pushing 14 buttons on a controller. Altering the interface may mean the difference between a hot seller and a bona fide phenomenon.

"Involving the broader audience of not just gamers with interfaces that are more intuitive and familiar to them is definitely a key



TN Games' ForceWear vests.



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"What we're seeing at GDC is a move toward more direct contribution from gamers, in terms of what was traditionally only the domain of developers," Moledina notes. "Indie developers, developers, site publishers and execs at publishers are all looking at the phenomenon of YouTube, Facebook and MySpace, and are thinking, 'Wait a minute, we're the game industry. We're supposed to be the ex-



part of the show," says Moledina. "Human-computer interface is something developers and engineers talk about a lot, and we have a session by Emotiv Systems, which is working on a technology to control game objects and characters with your mind."

Speaking of changing the interface, turning the cell phone into a widely-used gaming device is the goal of the mobile games market. Currently, the Asia-Pacific region leads the mobile charge as cell phone users in North America and many parts of Europe are less comfortable with paying for games through micro transactions. A growing trend that could change all this is ad-supported play, a concept that has worked brilliantly in the casual market. One company on the forefront of this movement is HOVR (www.hovr.com).

HOVR co-founder and VP of business development Depak Gupta says mobile gaming is benefiting from the growing popularity of bite-sized entertainment,

most notably short video content found on the aforementioned YouTube and other websites. He also notes that mobile car-

roughly one percent of them actually pay for content. Most are playing the free games that come loaded on the handset or can be easily downloaded.

"They view that as a very casual activity and are not very interested in shelling out six to 10 dollars to pay for the game," says Gupta. "We're able to get a much, much larger audience which can download and play these games without having to worry about any cost to them."

Classic casual games such as Solitaire, Chess and Tetris are still the top choices in mobile gaming, but that may soon change as cell phone manufacturers start to communicate with game developers to come up with ways to make the experience more dynamic. Taking a page from the Wii playbook, two new phones sold in Japan employ a camera and springs to detect motion so users can bowl and play other sports games by swinging their mobile handsets.

What will they think of next? That's what GDC is all about. The conference and expo take place Feb. 18-22 at San Francisco's Moscone Center. ■



Guitar Hero III for Wii.



riers in the U.S. report about 25 percent of their subscribers playing games, and

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COMING SOON

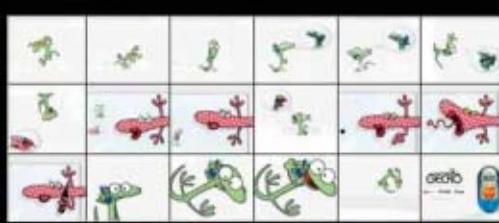
PELOPS (THE DONKEY)
PHYLLIS DILLER

QUEEN
DEBBIE REYNOLDS

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Your Guide to the Oscars

Part 3 of 3

It's a Small World of Shorts After All

by Ellen Wolff

In this season of Oscar nominations, Annie honorees and Sundance selections, competition is definitely in the air. However, the operative phrase in the animated short film field seems to be "vive la difference," since there's little or no overlap among the lists. Two Sundancing shorts caught Oscar's eye, but the Annie for Best Animated Short category represented a different group of films entirely. Most notably, the Motion Picture Academy's list turned out to be thoroughly international, with nominated films from France, Russia, two from Canada and one directed by a Brit but animated in Poland and Norway. And though 3D-CGI has dom-

it? Make sure that they see what you intend, and that they feel what you want them to."

Even Pigeons Go To Heaven (Même Les Pigeons Vont Au Paradis)

This is the one nominee that is purely CG-animated, and what French studio BUF Compagnie artist Samuel Tourneux clearly wanted audiences to do was laugh. It teems with atmospheric textures, quirky character designs and plot twists, and while it features the grim reaper it's anything but grim. Tourneux's highly polished nine-minute film reflects his decade of experience with

"I've always found that the short film Oscar always goes to the film that has the most emotional impact on the audience, regardless of technique. As Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston used to say, 'What do you want the audience to see, and how do you want them to feel about it?'"

—Animator Bill Kroyer,
who is a member of the Academy Awards short film screening committee

inated animated features for years, only one Oscar-nominated short fit that description. Instead, the enduring appeal of stop motion animation stood out, aided by digital tweaking that produced dazzling effects.

"I think people will thoroughly enjoy the variety," says Bill Kroyer, who's on the Academy's short film screening committee and is a past nominee himself for the 1988 short *Technological Threat*. "I've always found that the short film Oscar always goes to the film that has the most emotional impact on the audience, regardless of technique. As Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston used to say, 'What do you want the audience to see, and how do you want them to feel about

*Even Pigeons Go To Heaven
(Même Les Pigeons Vont Au Paradis).*



CG and the digital expertise of BUF (which has delivered impressive effects work on numerous studio features such as *Arthur and the Invisibles* and *Spider-Man 3*), and it has already won honors at Annecy and Ars Electronica.

I Met the Walrus

The Canadian entry of 25-year-old director Josh Raskin comes with a quite a back-story as the newcomer used a 38-year old soundtrack to tell his story. Because that soundtrack is a never-before-heard interview with John Lennon, audiences are taking note. The five-minute film illustrates Lennon's comments through pen-and-ink sketches by James Braithwaite and Alex Kurina's digital illustrations, and stylistically echoes the animation we've seen on *Monty Python* and, appropriately enough, *Yellow Submarine*. Funded by a grant from Bravo!, it's already been honored by AFI, several Canadian festivals and last year's inaugural Platform Fest in Portland, Oregon, and it also screened at Sundance.

My Love (Moya Lyubov)

This painstakingly animated short produced at Russia's Dag Film Studio is another shining example of dazzling technique. The paint-on-glass approach of

Alexander Petrov's 26-minute film is uniquely suited to the film's poignant storyline—as if a Dostoyevsky story was painted by Renoir. Petrov previously

won an Animated Short Film Oscar for 1999's *The Old Man and the Sea* and was also nominated for the shorts *Rusalka (The Mermaid)* and *Korova*

continued on page 14

**SONY PICTURES ANIMATION PROUDLY CONGRATULATES
THE HARDWORKING AND PASSIONATE SURF'S UP CAST AND CREW**

ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE - BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

10 - ASIFA ANNIE AWARD NOMINATIONS

4 - VISUAL EFFECTS SOCIETY AWARD NOMINATIONS

Aaron Lawn	Christopher Poplin	Gustav Melich	Jeremy (Jae) Simpson	Josh Roessler	Matt Hausman	Rob Machado
Aaron Wilson	Christopher Walsh	Gwendelyn Robson	Jeremy Selan	Joty Lam	Matt Hollingsworth	Rob Simonsen
Adriana Jaroszewicz	CJ Hobgood	Harald Kraut	Jeremy Squires	Juan Gonzalez	Matt RAMPAS	Robert Cordier
Alan Chen	Clint Chua	Heather Dietz	Jerry Schmitz	Junko Igarashi	Matthew Chambers	Robert Fox
Alan Hawkins	Cody Cameron	Henry Sato, Jr.	Jess Harrell	Justin Diamond	Matthew J. Munn	Robert W. Crain
Albert Golembiowski	Cottalango Loorthu	Henry Vera	Jesse Andrearwatha	Justin Marshall	Matthew Kiyoshi Wong	Robin Alan Linn
Alberto Velez	Craig Welsh	Hiroshi Mori	Jessica Berri	Kaan Kaylon	Matthew Plec	Robin Degenon
Alien Chen	D.J. Kirkbride	Hiroyuki Miyoshi	Jessica Smialek	Karen Sickles	Matthew W. Taylor	Rodrigo Ibanez
Alex Lostauau	Dae-Ho Han	Howard London, C.A.S.	Jill Ragaway	Karl Herbst	Melissa Sturm	Roger Vizard
Alex Whitney	Damon Bard	Ian Jenkins	Jill Shane Butler	Kathleen Woolery	Melva Young	Ron Bublitz
Allen Foster	Dan Lavender	Isobel Griffiths	Joachim Bärnreuther	Keiko Koyama	Michael Ball	Ron Lukas
Allen Gonzales	Dan Weston	J Robert Ray	Joe Mandia	Keith A. Sintay	Michael Bloomberg	Ron Smith
Amy Christensen	Dana L. Belben	J.C. Cornwell	John B. Anderson	Keith Paciello	Michael C. Walling	Ryan S. Heniser
Amy Hronek	Dana L. Bennett	Jack Finlin	John Bevelheimer	Kelley Rarey	Michael Condro	Saba Routhale
Amy R. Gordon	Dana Pettit-Vanhove	Jack Ranjo	John Butiu	Kelly Barschig	Michael Ford	Sal Masekela
Anders J.L. Beer	Dani Morrow	Jaime Pona	John Clark	Kelly Slater	Michael Frederick Wilson	Sam Richards
Andrea Lackey Pace	Daniel Kramer	Jake Paterson	John Cygan	Ken Maruyama	Michael J. Benavente, M.P.S.E.	Samantha N. Brown
Andrea Miloro	Daniel Lake	Jamaal Bradley	John Flynn	Ken McCloskey	Michael Killoren	Sandie Scoredos
Andrea Soils	Daniel Leung	James Anderson	John Han	Ken Williams	Michael Kimmei	Sandra Ryan-Moran
Andreas Procopiou	Daniel Patrick Naulin	James Battersby	John J. Lee	Kenji Sweeney	Michael Kuehn	Sarah Bourgeois
Andres Martinez	Daniel Villarreal	James Bluma	John McLaughlin	Kenny Lam	Michael Lasker	Scott Bogoniewski
Andrew Anderson	Daniele Tosti	James Crossley	John Wong	Keridan Elliott	Michael Muir	Scott Fernemaker
Andrew Hofman	Danny Dilman	James Salter	Jon Heder	Kerry Nordquist	Michael Sandrik	Scott Williams
Anett Gough	Danny Mann	James Williams	Jonathan F. Garcia	Kevin Freeman	Michael Trujillo	Sean Corze
Anthony Durazzo	Daphne Ryan	James Woods	Jonathan S. Swartz	Kevin T. Hahn	Michelle Leigh	Sean White
Armand Serrano	Darren Fisher	Jan Rabson	Joong Choi	Kimberley Liptrap	Mickie T. McGowan	Seth Hipp
Armen Melkonian	Darren Wills	Jana Day	Jordan Harris	Kishore Mulchandani	Miguel A. Oaxaca	Seung-Hyuk Kim
Armin Bruderlin	Dave Hardin	Jane Krakowski	Jordan Soles	Kris Pearn	Miguel Gardo	Shane Glading
Ash Brannon	Dave R. Howe	Jason Brewer	Jorge Bobadilla	Kurt Judson	Mike Parsons	Shannon McGee
Barbara Zipperman	David Conlon	Jason Cooper	Joseph DiCesare	Kyudon Choi	Mike Webster	Sharon Berlin
Barry Weiss	David Farley	Jason Doss	Joseph Slomka	Lorraine Newman	Mike Yazjian	Shawn McInerney
Benjamin I. Cinelli	David Godwin	Jason Galeon	Joseph Thomas	Larry White	Miku Kayama	Sheri Ozeki
Bert Van Brande	David Hall	Jason King	Josh Beveridge	Laura Meredith	Mindy Sterling	Sherry Lynn
Bertrand Cordier	David Kalbteizer	Jason Lethcoe	Jeff Bridges	Lauren Ann Littleton	Miriam Litman	Shia LaBeouf
Beth Tyszkiewicz	David Perry	Jason Madsen	Jeff Hill	Lauren Matheson	Mitch Dobrowner	Siegfried Ostertag
Betty Johnston	David R. Bleich	Jason Price	Jeff Lin	Lauren Prince	Moon Jun Kang	Sosh Minsepassi
Bill Anastas	David R. Davies	JD Cowles	Jeff Ranjo	Laurent Chabonneau	Moti Cohen	Stan Szrymski
Bill Farmer	David Schaub	Jeanine Marques	Jeff Sakurai	Lea C. Lambert	Mychael Danna	Stefaan Contreras
Bill Haller	David Simas	Jean-Paul Beauplieu	Jeff Schu	Leslie Baker	Nate Hopper	Stephanie Greco
Bill Villarreal	David Stodolny	Jeff Willette	Jeff Vacanti	Leslie Pirard	Nicholas David	Stephen Candell
Blair Zajac	Dawn Guinta	Jeff Bridges	Jeff Willette	Lia Abbate	Nicholas N. Ball	Stephen Kowalski
Bob Bergen	Dean E. Miya	Jeff Hill	Jeffrey Benjamin	Lisa Suzuki	Nick Hiatt	Stephen Marshall
Bob Logan	Debbie Denise	Jeff Lin	Jeffrey Croke	Liza Richardson	Nicola Lavender	Steve Avouاجeli
Bond-Jay Ting	Deborah Carlson	Jeff Ranjo	Jeffrey Kember	Lu Kondor	Nicole Herr	Steve Blakey
Brad Brock	Denis Samoilov	Jeff Sakurai	Jeffrey Pohl	Lucas A. Miller	Nicole Koop	Steve Childers
Brad Haehnel	Denise Koyama	Jeff Vacanti	Jennifer Cranfill	Luis Labrador	Nicole Seiber	Steve LaVites
Brain Hamblin	Derek Friesenborg	Jeff Willette	Jennifer Doe	Lydia Bottegoni	Nicole Tester	Steve Matson
Brandon Thomas	Dhasarath Ravindranath	Jeffrey Benjamin	Jennifer Janes	Lynn Basas	Noel Vaughan Eaton	Steven Liu
Brandy Isom	Diane St. Clair	Jeffrey Croke	Jennifer Monnar	Manson Jones	Noëlle Triarieau	Steven Pierre Gordon
Brendan Ryan	Diedrich Bader	Jeffrey Kember	Jenny Fulle	Mara Levin	Nori Kaneko	Steven Ticknor
Brett Paton	Dinny Miller	Jeffrey Pohl	Jeffrey Benjamin	Marc Ostroff	Olin Kimberly	Sue Hyunsook Shim
Brian Casper	Dipankar Goswamy	Jennifer Cranfill	Jennifer Doe	Marcelo Vignali	Onny Carr	Sumit Das
Brian Coffee	Don Levy	Jennifer Doe	Jennifer Janes	Marcos Mateu-Mestre	Oscar Castillo	Sunny Apinchapong
Brian F. Ripley	Don Rhymer	Jennifer Janes	Jennifer Monnar	Marino Angeles	Pablo Collins	Suri Denduluri
Brian Keeney	Dougg Williams	Jennifer Monnar	Jenny Fulle	Mario Cantone	Patrick Buckner	Suzanne Labrie
Brian Posehn	Douglas James Smith	Jenny Fulle	Jeff Bridges	Mark Story	Patrick Finley	Suzi Brown
Brian Scott	Douglas James Smith	Jenny Fulle	Jeff Hill	Mark Wendell	Patrick G. Ramos	Svetla Gressak
Brian Wong	Douglas Yoshida	Jeff Bridges	Jeff Lin	Mark Yeager	Patrick Osborne	Sylvain Deboisssey
Briana Ryan	Edu Gombert	Jeff Bridges	Jeff Ranjo	Martin J. Lopez	Paul Gerard	Takao Noguchi
Bridget Mrozczowski	Enrique Muñoz	Jeffrey Benjamin	Jeffrey Croke	Marvin Kim	Paul Lasaine	Tarsus Jackson
Bruce Dobrin	Eric "Fatty" Les	Jeffrey Croke	Jeffrey Kember	Mary Hidaigo	Paul McGhee	Taylor Campbell
Bruce Navsky	Eric Tablada	Jeffrey Pohl	Jennifer Cranfill	Mary Rachel Thompson	Paula Tudurof	Ted Alexandre
Bryan Lentenbrink	Erick Miller	Jennifer Cranfill	Jennifer Doe	Mathew Selby	Penney Linkelman Cox	Teresa Ganzel
Camille Eden	Erick Strauss	Jennifer Doe	Jennifer Janes	Matt Cordner	Pepe Valencia	Terrence Robertson-Fall
Carl Hooper	Erik J. Borzi	Jennifer Janes	Jenny Fulle	Matt Davis	Pete Burns	Theresa Bentz
Carlos Lemus	Erik Ober	Jordan Hurd	Jeff Bridges	Matt Hansen	Pete Upson	Tim Llewellyn
Carlos Pedroza	Evangeline Monroe	François Chardavoine	Jeffrey Benjamin	Peter Nash	Peter Nash	Tim Rank
Carlye Archibeque	Frank Müller	Franklin Londin	Jeffrey Croke	Peter Samuel Tierras	Peter Shimmers	Tim Sarnoff
Carolyn Guske-Amaral	Frederic Durand	Frederic Durand	Jeffrey Kember	Peter Wright	Piotrek Krawczyk	Tina Bilezikian
Carolyn Oros	Fredrik Limsater	Freshtha Ramsey	Jeffrey Pohl	Pryya Shah	R. Ivan Bilancio	Todd Boyce
Caryn Jacob	Gale De Los Santos	Gale De Los Santos	Jennifer Cranfill	R. Stirling Duguid	Rachael Phillips	Todd Pilger
Cathy Deutmeyer	Garrett Cox	Garrett Cox	Jennifer Doe	Raffaello Vecchione	Raj Naiksatam	Todd T. Hara
Cathy Jones	Garrick McLaughlin	Garrick McLaughlin	Jennifer Janes	Ramiro Gomez	Ravi Jagannadhan	Tok Braun
Chad Hellmuth	Gary Hecker	Gaston Ugarte	Jenny Fulle	Rebecca Chaires Kuska	Reed Buck	Tom Hershey
Chad Stewart	Gaston Ugarte	Gavin Moran	Jeff Bridges	Reese Elöwa	Reggae Folcher	Tom Kluyvens
Charlene Maryland	Geo Snelling	Geo Snelling	Jeffrey Benjamin	Renato Dos Anjos	Richard Chavez	Tom Pushpathadam
Charlie Parker	George H. Joblove	Georgia Cano	Jeffrey Croke	Rene Limberger	Richard Lee	Tony Navarro
Chloe La Fond	Gerardo De La Cruz	Gerardo De La Cruz	Jeffrey Kember	Reid Glenn	Rick Glenn	Troy Moore
Chris Bolvyn	Grady Campbell	Grant Blaylock	Jeffrey Pohl	Rob Bredow	Rob Bredow	Tyler Franks
Chris Buck	Grant Blaylock	Gredel Berrios-Calladine	Jennifer Cranfill	Surtees	Ulrika Åkander	Vic Fraser
Chris Gallagher	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Greg Galliani	Jennifer Doe	Terry Moore	Victor Grant	Victor Wang
Chris Hurt	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jenny Fulle	Walter F. Hyneman	Wendy Mashburn	Winston Quigol
Chris Jenkins	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jeff Bridges	Wesley Snipes	Zooey Deschanel	Zsolt Krajcik
Chris Juen	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jeffrey Benjamin	Wesley Snipes	Zsolt Krajcik	
Chris Wachter	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jeffrey Croke	Wesley Snipes	Zsolt Krajcik	
Chrissy Habblett	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jeffrey Kember	Wesley Snipes	Zsolt Krajcik	
Christian Darren	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jeffrey Pohl	Wesley Snipes	Zsolt Krajcik	
Christine J. Lo	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jennifer Cranfill	Wesley Snipes	Zsolt Krajcik	
Christopher Burdorff	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Gregory Wade Reynolds	Jennifer Doe	Wesley Snipes	Zsolt Krajcik	



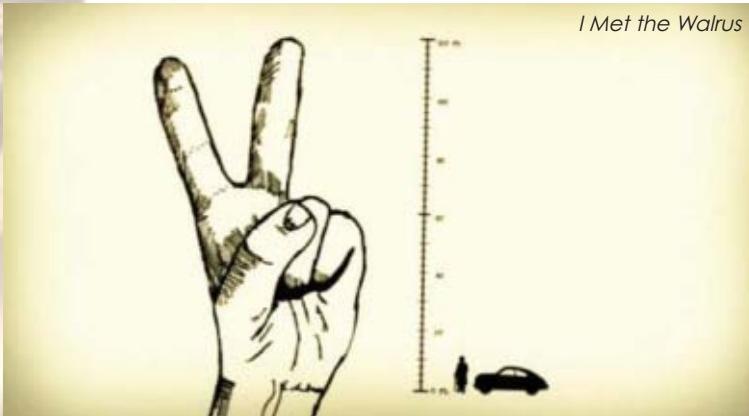
Prokofiev's Peter & the Wolf



Madame Tutli-Putli



I Met the Walrus

My Love
(Moya Lyubov)

Oscar coverage

continued from page 12

(*The Cow*). But along with the technical mastery of the animation, notes Bill Koyer, "The passion of the expressions and the authenticity of the art direction is unbelievable." It's also worth noting that the film was Studio Ghibli's first foray in releasing international titles in Japan.

Prokofiev's Peter & the Wolf

Although Disney's Clyde Geronimi had tackled Prokofiev's classical music chestnut before, British director Suzie Templeton opted for an edgier, more cautionary tale than the 1946 version of the classic. While the half-hour film was produced by Britain's BreakThru Films, the stop motion animation was done at Se-ma-for Studios in Poland, a company whose 60-year history includes an Oscar for the 1983 animated

short *Tango*. Norway's Storm Studio also composited CG effects into the film, providing the latest example of how digital tools can help stop-motion animation remain alive and well. Templeton's short has already won a slew of international awards (including the Annecy Cristal and Audience Awards) and it's also up for a BAFTA.

Madame Tutli-Putli

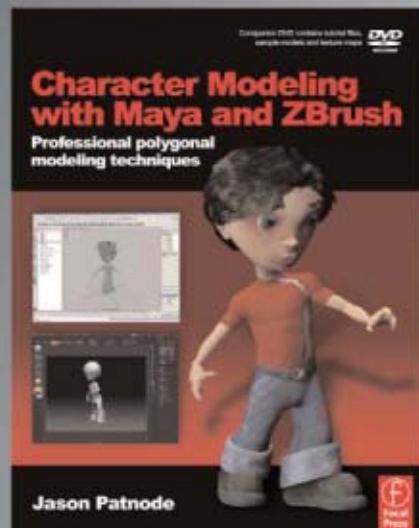
Funded by Canada's National Film Board, this especially dramatic (and down-right Hitchcockian) example of modern stop motion was directed by Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski (known for their commercial work as Clyde Henry Production.) Four years in the making, the surreal 17-minute tale of a woman on a train has attracted considerable buzz (especially at Ottawa and Sundance) because of the characters' mesmerizing eyes. Painter

Jason Walker used the time re-mapping feature of Adobe After Effects to re-animate and composite—frame by frame—the filmed eyes of real actors. "It was like having a deck of cards and extracting only the diamonds," he says. "The complexity of the tools that these artists have used is overwhelming," observes Koyer. "But it always comes back to an artist expressing something, and the audience feeling it." If there's another winning attribute that's more important, Koyer thinks it may be timing. "You never want to submit your film when there's a Nick Park film in the competition. But he's stopped making shorts now so everybody else is back in business!" ■

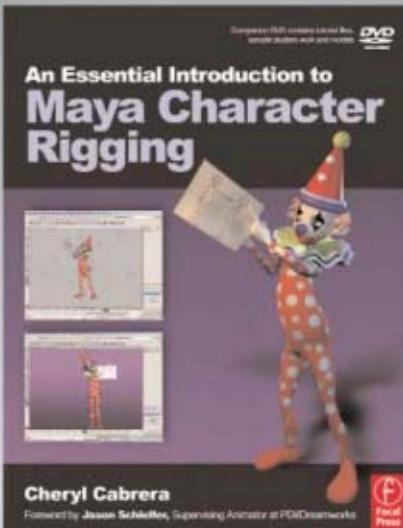
To find out which shorts and features take home the golden statuette this year, tune in to ABC on Sunday, February 24 at 5 p.m. PT/8 p.m. ET.

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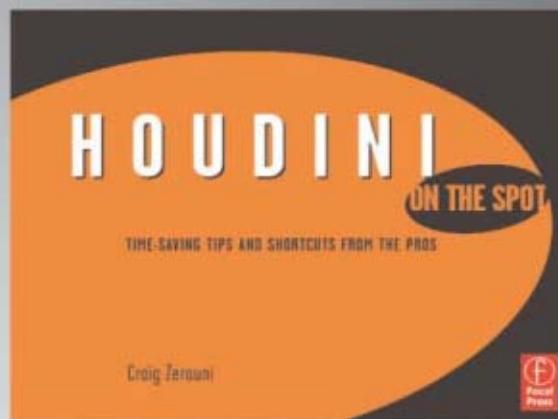
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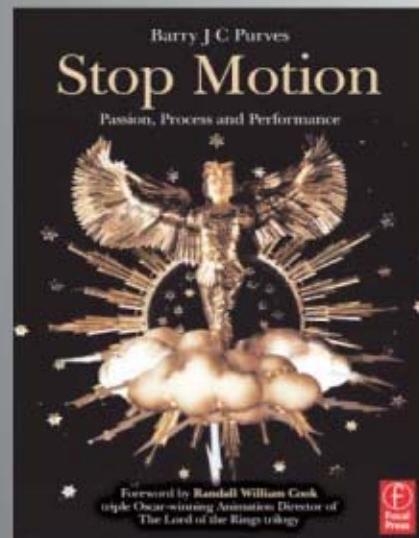
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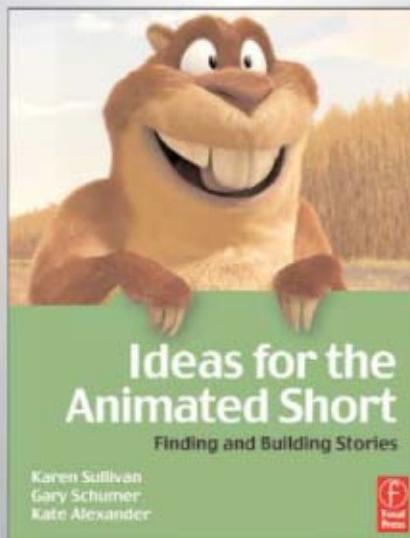
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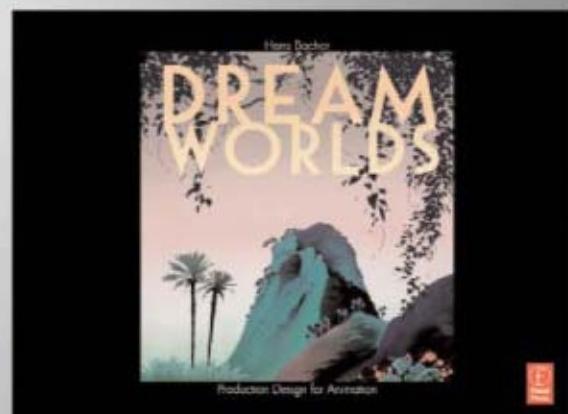
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Mo-Capping the Anti-War Movement

Brett Morgen's *Chicago 10* uses animation to recreate the show-trial of the 1968 Democratic National Convention protesters. **by Chris Grove**

Over a year after it opened at the 2007 version of the Sundance Film Festival, Brett Morgen's film *Chicago 10* is finally getting a U.S. release from art house distributor Roadside Attractions.

Struck from the same vein as *Harlan County, USA*, Morgen's documentary simmers with the same kind of controlled anger that makes Barbara Kopple's Academy Award-winning film as compelling today as it was in 1976. The subject of Morgen's film is the show-trial of the so-called Chicago Seven (originally eight) conspirators, the purported leaders of the street protests at the August 1968 Democratic National Convention. In this case, Morgen has made the group into the *Chicago 10* because he includes the defendants' attorneys Leonard Weinglass and William Kunstler in the mix (both of whom went to jail on contempt charges) and Black Panther Party leader Bobby Seale. Made in reaction to the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003 when there were no street protests, Morgen says of his film, "The time seemed right to look back [at the trial] and the anti-war movement of the 1960s to have an understanding of what it means to take a stand."

The film is a mix of live-action footage, stills and animation. The archive of the events surrounding the protest includes some 180 hours of professional and amateur 16mm film footage and 14,000 stills. While he had an embarrassment of riches to choose from with live-action material, Morgen had a bit of a problem with respect to the central event of the film, the con-

sspiracy trial itself. Because there were no cameras in the courtroom in 1968, Morgen needed to figure out how to portray the dramatic events inside Judge Julius Hoffman's U.S. District Court chambers. Re-enactments were quickly ruled out. "Too cheesy," says Lewis Kofsky, director of computer graphics and vfx at New York-based Curious Pictures, which is also the production studio for popular toons such as *Codename: Kids Next Door* and *Little Einsteins*. And there was to be none of the talking heads that populate the documentaries of Ken Burns. "I didn't want to make a film about a bunch of people [saying] how great they were back then," says Morgen. Besides, four of the eight are dead.

As he was mulling over the problem Morgen happened to read a quote from co-conspirator Jerry Ru-



bin describing the trial as a "cartoon show." That was the answer. "By animating the trial I would not only avoid the clichés, I'd be able to make a statement about the circus-like nature of the courtroom," Morgen says. Enter Curious Pictures. Rotoscoping live-action footage was quickly jettisoned as an option. "It looks in the way the characters look and move right from the start," says Kofsky, leader of the animation team and a producer on the film. And 2D was ruled out after a great deal of testing.

Morgen wanted more fluidity of motion and an element of realism in the sequences. So the decision was made to go with a mix of CGI and some traditional cel animation. "We wanted the characters to kind of look like superheroes," Kofsky says.

The first step was to use the motion-capture technology used by Robert Zemeckis on *Polar Express*, albeit without the budget ("Pixar on a shoestring" is how Kofsky describes it). With the benefit of 24 camera angles from the mo-cap stage and some seriously tweaked off-the-shelf and proprietary software, the boffins at Curious created a virtual, 3D space within which Morgen could direct the action and the characters. "It was an integration of the filming and editorial processes," says Kofsky. With almost unlimited options available to the director, the creative process for the animation sequences became camera independent.

Low budgets being the mother of invention, the filmmaking team decided to render the final animation as simply as possible in the post stage. That let Morgen match the aesthetics of a sequence with its tone. While some sequences have the look and feel of a Saturday morning cartoon and others approach the photo-real, at least some (including the recurring images of Abbie Hoffman talking to WBAI late-night talk show host Bob Fass) are rendered to achieve a more dreamlike look. While some reviewers found the style jarring ("It's very hard to focus on what computer-generated William Kunstler is saying when all you can think is 'Christ, those teeth look wrong,'" says one), the overall effect is cumulative and, in the end, powerful.

While we live in a much more passive age than the late 1960s, it's not hard to imagine, for example, what the reaction would be today to a picture of an African American defendant (Bobby Seale) bound and gagged in a courtroom to silence his protest. ■



Brett Morgen



Lewis Kofsky

Brett Morgen's *Chicago 10* opens in select U.S. theaters on February 29.

Plugged-In Prague

Goat Story, Jan Tománek's distinctive new CG-animated feature, aims to chew up a new place in the Czech Republic's artistic landscape. by Ramin Zahed

Die-hard animation fans all over the world have special respect for the works of Czech artists such as Jiří Trnka and Jan Švankmajer. This year, a new name may join those ranks as excerpts from Jan Tománek's CG-animated feature, *Goat Story: Legends of Old Prague* is presented at the Cartoon Movie event in Germany, six months before its premiere in Prague.

Billed as the first Eastern European CG-animated movie, Tománek's tale is set in medieval Prague and centers on the friendship between a young villager named Jemmy and his Goat. Complications arise as Goat gets jealous when his good friend loses his heart to a streetwise girl named Katy and begins to work on the city's famous Astronomical Clock. As is customary in many of these old tales and fables, the devil also plays a big role in the story!

"I believe that our movie is different than the sweet and often visually identical movies we see from the big studios," says Tománek, who worked on several acclaimed CG-animated shorts before embarking on the 80-minute movie. "The continuation of the old Czech animated tradition could be interesting not only for domestic viewers. International audiences would also enjoy Czech humor and the mystical elements that take place in medieval Prague, along with its famous historic attractions such as the Astronomical Clock and Charles Bridge."

Tománek says he first came up with the idea for the movie in the summer of 2002, when the European

Union MEDIA development program was introduced in the Czech Republic. "We were able to obtain some support to develop the movie, and in 2003 we began preparatory work on the movie," says the 30-year-old who directed, co-wrote, co-produced and designed the project. "The production itself began in our new Art And Animation Studio in the summer of 2006."

Goat Story is being made for the remarkable price tag of only two million euros (that's close to \$3 million—about 1/50 of your typical Hollywood CG-animated feature). In addition to the money raised by the MEDIA program, the film was financed by the private resources of AAA Studio and various other co-producers.

Obviously Tománek and his team hope that the film will reach a wide audience, but they're quite aware of the artistic legacy of the talented animators before them. "In Europe, and especially in the Czech Re-

public, there's a long-lasting tradition of the animated film that differs from that in America," says Tománek. "European animation is based on the auteur's vision—a good example is Sylvain Chomet's

The Triplets of Belleville—They bear the artist's originality instead of studios' group decisions. The film is the auteur's 'child.' It isn't only a commercial product—the same is true in my case. I'm the screenwriter, artist/designer, director and I like to conserve the uniform continuity and the special puppet-inspired look of the characters, which comes from the Czech tradition."

According to the filmmaker, after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the government funding of animation was drastically cut. As he points out, "The government has had a long-standing tradition of funding eight-minute animated series for children on public TV, and that still exists, but full-length features are in a totally different situation. With the exception of an anthology release, our film is the first full-length Czech animated movie made for theatrical distribution in the past 20 years."

Another remarkable fact about the project is that only 10 3D animators and graphic artists worked on it. "It is a very funny

number compared to the teams employed at huge studios like Pixar or DreamWorks," adds Tománek. "Nevertheless, our studio is one of the biggest in our country, and we own the largest number of Maya licenses in the Czech Republic. We

were able to make the cloth and hair simulations of almost all the characters—and that's very unusual, even for big studios. Because we had such a small team, each one of us had to work as hard as 20 people, at least!" And that kind of personal pride and artistic passion is something neither the devil nor big studio money can replace. ■



Jan Tománek



To see a trailer for the feature, visit
www.goatstorymovie.com.



World of Wonders

Bruce Timm and his skillful team at Warner Bros. Animation explore the retro universe and optimistic visions of *Justice League: The New Frontier*. *by Thomas J. McLean*

Comic books frequently look back to their origins for inspiration, but no recent look back has so successfully captured the optimism and excitement of the Atomic Age and the heroes it spawned than DC: *The New Frontier*. Created by former WB storyboard artist and designer Darwyn Cooke, the DC Comics graphic novel is now morphing to animation as *Justice League: The New Frontier*, the second in a planned series of direct-to-DVD features adapted from popular DC stories.

The obvious man to exec produce the project was Bruce Timm, who has steered animated DC Comics material to the big and small screens since the 1992 debut of *Batman: The Animated Series*. Timm says that each DC project has unique challenges, but adapting from source material that's both popular and a personal expression is especially challenging.

The first major issue was adapting to a script the scope and structure of the original book, which told the tale of an alien

presence called The Centre whose power touched characters as diverse as The Losers and Challengers of the Unknown. The final confrontation with The Centre foretells the formation of the Justice League of America and the transition to the 1960s epitomized by President John F. Kennedy's famous "new frontier" speech.

"I sometimes refer to it as our Robert Altman movie, because it really is structured that way," Timm says. "There's all these different storylines that don't really intersect for a very long time. It's really only in the last third of the movie that the storylines really start coming together."

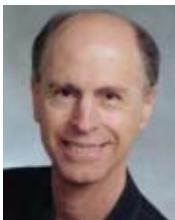
Veteran animation writer Stan Berkowitz

"I sometimes refer to it as our Robert Altman movie, because it really is structured that way. There's all these different storylines that don't really intersect for a very long time. It's really only in the last third of the movie that the storylines really start coming together."

—**Exec producer Bruce Timm**

went through five outlines of the script, constantly shaving down the story, which ran nearly 400 pages as a comic, to fit a 75-minute running time and spotlight the Justice League characters. "At certain points we took out stuff, and then later put things back in—kind of like packing for a trip and realizing, no, you can't take everything," he says.

Another area of concern is how to balance the interests of fans who want the book adapted as faithfully as possible and the necessary wider audience that doesn't know the intricate lore



Stan Berkowitz



David Bullock

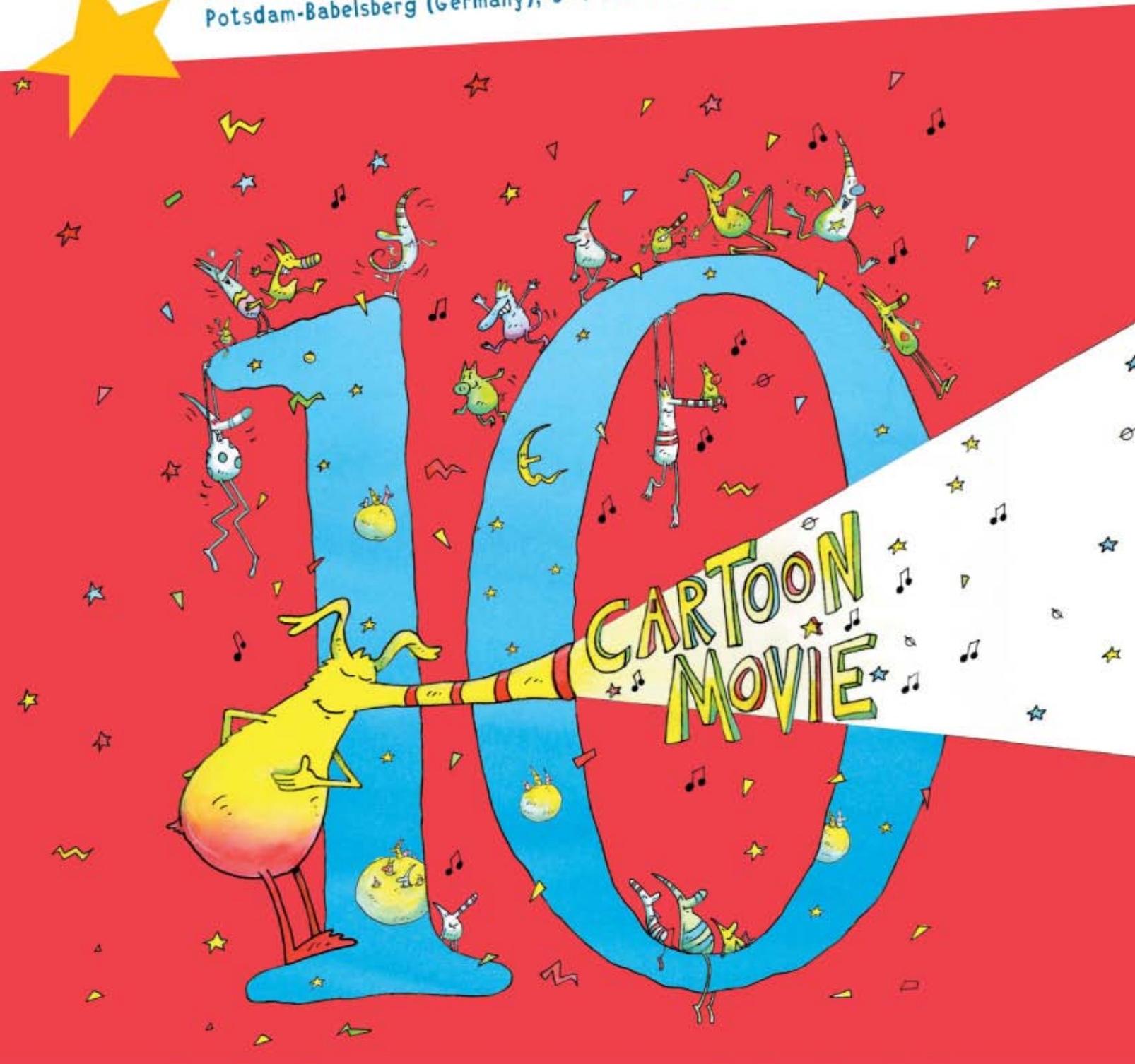


Michael Goguen



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Heroic Voices: Directed by David Bullock, *Justice League: The New Frontier* features a stellar voice cast, which includes Jeremy Sisto, David Boreanaz, Brooke Shields, Neil Patrick Harris, Kyle MacLachlan and Lucy Lawless.



behind the characters. "You really do want to bring new people in, but you don't want to offend the people who bought the book and feel, 'Oh yeah, you changed too much and all my favorite stuff is gone,'" he says.

Berkowitz says he found it liberating to write for the older audience that putting *New Frontier* out on DVD permits. "You're allowed to show the real effects of violence, you're allowed a little bit more sexuality. For me, it felt like a more natural kind of writing to have the G-rated feeling lifted and be able to write PG-13," he says.

As a WB animation alumnus, Cooke's style of comic art already evolved out of the look developed by Timm and others for various DC toons. That made retaining the look of the comic a priority for supervising producer Michael Goguen. "In the comic, it's a bit more of an impressionistic style, the way the backgrounds are depicted and even the way the characters are drawn, so we had to sort of solidify everything for animation," he says.

Goguen spearheaded the extensive research into the look of the Atomic



Age, right down to the buttons, dials and levers used on NASA control panels. Cooke designed most of the characters for animation from his home in maritime Canada, and director David Bullock came up with a retro title sequence using art taken directly from the comic book.

While the final film effectively meshes Cooke's work with a traditional animation style, it wasn't always easy to maintain during production. "The overseas animators kind of have a default style," Timm says. "When the early pencil stuff came back, they kind of looked like Darwyn's stuff but they didn't quite nail it, so Mike Goguen took Darwyn's models and almost made diagrams out of them to explain to the

Korean animators what they were getting wrong."

While CG models and other modern techniques were used in places, Bullock says they intentionally de-emphasized them and went for "an old-school 2D look as much as possible."

One such example is the use of a sliding cell in a sequence involving The Centre. "We could have done it as a complete CG

model and moved all around it, but in order to keep the picture looking sort of traditional and retro, we thought it was best to maintain it as a 2D painted sliding cell element," Goguen says.

Similarly, camera work was kept simple. "We tried to steer more into the thinking of a comic illustrator like [Milton] Caniff or [Alex] Toth, as opposed to something with an anime influence," Bullock says.

The popularity of the graphic novel means expectations for *New Frontier* are high among fans, who will get their first look at the film at WonderCon in San Francisco in late February, with the DVD going on sale Feb. 26 in single-disc, double-disc and hi-def editions. ■



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Rounding Up the Obscure and Celebrated

All about a Warner Bros. release to buzz about, plus a couple under-the-radar discs.

by Mercedes Milligan

Dragonlance: Dragons of Autumn Twilight [Paramount, \$19.99]

Lace up your boots and grab your broadswords, boys and girls, *Dragonlance: Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, the highly-anticipated fantasy epic based on Tracy Hickman's best-selling first book of the popular *Dragonlance Chronicles* series has finally made its DVD debut. The series has also spawned over 75 role-playing releases, six computer games and over 150 novels.

Dragons of Autumn Twilight is based on the Dungeons & Dragon's fan-franchise for which the series is named. It's about a band of heroes—the wizard Raistlin (Keifer Sutherland), priestess Goldmoon (Lucy Lawless) and half-elf warrior Tanis (Michael Rosenbaum)—who band together to protect their fantasy home world, Krynn, from an evil goddess and her army of vicious dragons.

With some remarkable animation



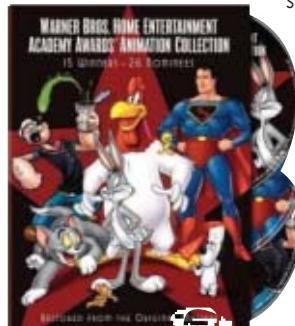
produced by India's Toonz Animation, Commotion Pictures and Epic Level Ent., and directed by animation vet Will Meugniot (*Ultimate Avengers II*), this film is well worth picking up—even if you've never rolled a natural 20.
[Release Date: January 15]

Warner Bros. Home Entertainment Presents: Academy Awards® Animation Collection 15 Winners ~ 26 Nominees [Warner Bros., \$44.98]

Just in time for Oscar season, Warner is releasing this remarkable three-disc collection of—as the title implies—15 Academy Award-winning shorts as well as 26 very worthy nominees. The set includes familiar characters and franchises from Hanna-Barbera, MGM, Max Fleischer, Warner Bros. and others, and is being released to coincide with two huge Hollywood anniversaries: The 85th Anniversary of WB Studios and the 80th Anniversary of the Academy Awards themselves.

Some of the featured shorts that took home the gold in years past include Tom and Jerry classics *Yankee Doodle Mouse* and *Quiet Please*, Friz Freleng favorite *Knighty-Knight Bugs* and Chuck Jones' abstract MGM-produced love story, *The Dot and the Line*, which has never before been released on DVD. Warner Home's VP of animation marketing, Amit Desai, says of the release, "This is the first time we've released a classic animation title featuring characters from different franchises. We made it our goal to truly showcase some of the finest cartoons ever made." We think this set serves as the perfect warm-up to this year's Animated Short race. See, we can all just get along!

[Release Date: February 12]



Minushi [CreateSpace, \$19]

We count ourselves lucky to exist in a time when new trails are being blazed in all corners of the animation industry, and over the '07 holidays yet another



brand-new piece of toon history was released. *Minushi* is billed as the first feature length film to be created entirely in Flash. Written and realized by independent Canadian animator Tyler Gibb, this 94-minute sci-fi adventure follows two orphans in search of their missing brother in a desolate world of "trigger-happy soldiers, merciless bandits and giant robots."

The movie took Gibb almost four years to complete, during which time he produced over 2,000 sheets of hand drawings and 7,000 hours of animation. During this incredible one-man effort, Gibb survived off of the revenue from banner ads on his site, www.boneland.com, which hosts his other popular cartoons. Now that Gibb is distributing *Minushi* on DVD (himself, of course) fans will be able to enjoy all 19 chapters of the epic (select episodes can be viewed online at Minushi.com), as well as 90 minutes of bonus material including a "making-of" docu. Now, all of you that want to support independent animation: Put your money where your mouth is!

[Release Date: December 13, 2007] ■



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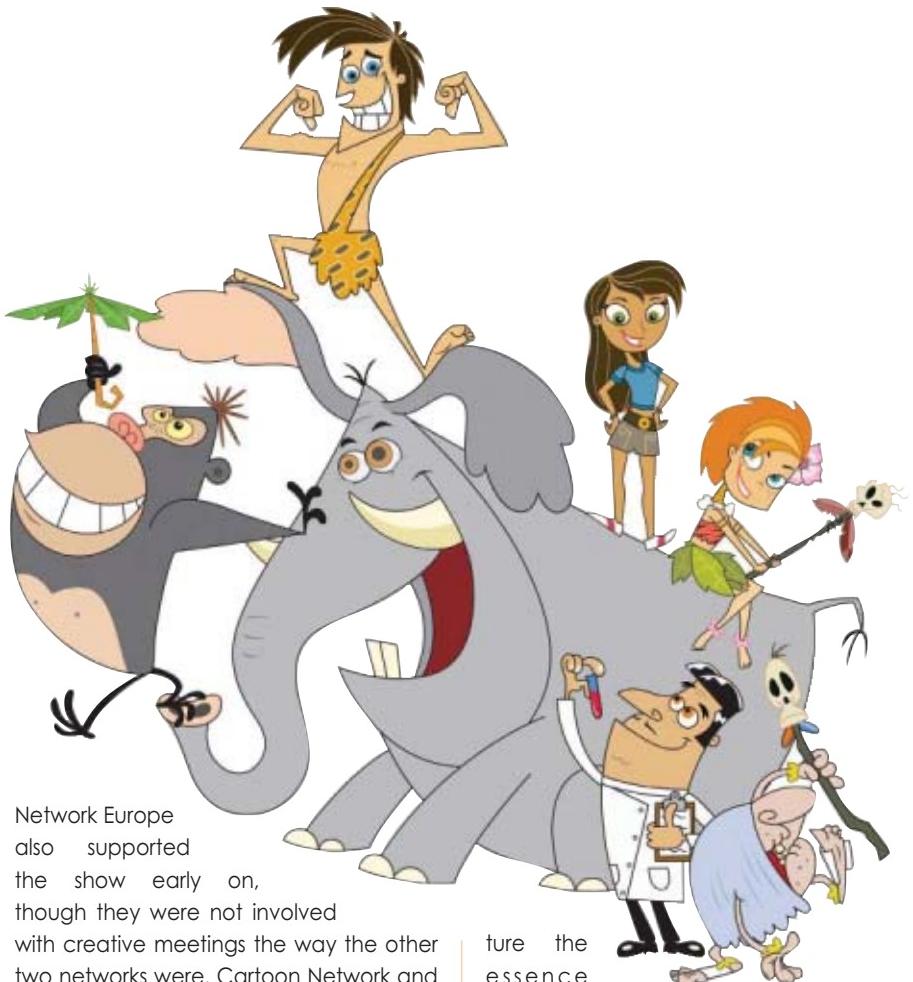
George of the Jungle swings back into action.

by Ryan Ball

Jay Ward only made 17 seven-minute episodes of the 1967 cartoon series *George of the Jungle*, yet the show is so ingrained in popular culture that just about everyone can recite the iconic theme song. Most kids today are familiar with the property because of Disney's 1997 hit live-action film starring Brendan Fraser and its 2003 direct-to-DVD sequel, but they're now getting to know the bumbling jungle man the way their parents did—in animated form. The all-new *George of the Jungle* debuted on Cartoon Network last month during its Friday night Fried Dynamite block and also airs on TELETOON in Canada.

The updated series is co-produced by Bullwinkle Studios (a joint venture of Entertainment Right's Classic Media and Jay Ward Prods. Inc.) and Canadian animation company Studio B Prods., a subsidiary of DHX Media Ltd. Tiffany Ward, daughter of the late Jay Ward and president of Ward Prods., serves as exec producer, along with Classic Media exec VP of production and creative affairs Evan Baily, Eric Ellenbogen, Studio B founding partners Chris Bartleman and Blair Peters and Studio B CFO and general manager Rob Simmons. Head writers/story editors Evan Gore and Heather Lombard previously worked on *Futurama* and *The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius*, among other popular cartoons.

George of the Jungle had little trouble getting broadcasters behind it. TELETOON was onboard from the beginning, and Cartoon Network came down from the fence when execs saw an animatic presentation. Nickelodeon U.K. and Cartoon



Network Europe also supported the show early on, though they were not involved with creative meetings the way the other two networks were. Cartoon Network and TELETOON both helped shape the show while Ward made sure it was something her father would be proud of.

"It's our legacy to protect Dad's characters and to bring them back to keep them going for new generations of kids as well," Ward remarks. "We really wanted to keep the purity of the Jay Ward legacy and the George characters going, but adapt them for this new century and kids of today."

George is still protecting the jungle of Mbebwe with the help of best pal Ape, love interest Ursula, his faithful, dog-like elephant, Shep, and the lovable Tookie Tookie bird. He's also still crashing into trees, but other things have changed since the original series debuted 41 years ago. The title hero is no longer a muscle-bound man in his twenties with a pompadour haircut, but rather a lean teen that children can relate to. Ursula has also been made over into an environmentally conscious do-gooder concerned with conserving the jungle and its inhabitants. Even the theme song has been spiffed up with a bit of hip-hop infusion to have today's kids tapping their toes.

The animation has been updated as well, but Ward feels it still manages to cap-

ture the essence of what made the original so much fun to look at. "Dad had put his own money, beyond what ABC paid, into making *George of the Jungle* the prettiest cartoon that Ward Prods. ever made," she tells us. "This George is very reminiscent of the backgrounds, the colors and the whole feel of





Jay Ward



Tiffany Ward



Chris Bartleman

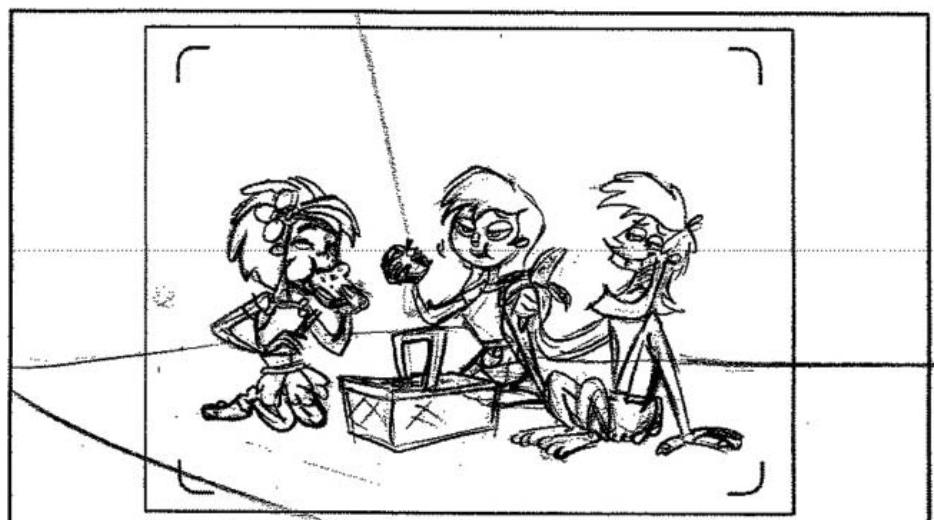


Evan Baily

the show, and I'm absolutely dazzled by Flash animation being able to do that."

Chris Bartleman, exec producer for Studio B, says working on the show has been a special experience, to say the least. "For us, as animators, it was that rare opportunity to touch something you grew up with and do something with it," he remarks. "We're making a show for kids, obviously, but for us it's kind of a peer thing. Our friends are going to look at it and see if we screw it up or do a great job."

Having Tiffany Ward look at everything and provide comments meant having a link to the property's original creator, according to Bartleman. "She was another set of eyes at the table, but the keeper-of-the-flame eyes, which was super important. We want to make a show for kids,



but we also don't want to ignore the great heritage that we have to work with. Why mess with that?"

The title, the recognizable characters and the ubiquitous theme song all bring a beneficial familiarity to the project, but Bartleman says everyone involved was careful not to rely solely on the brand and its history as they crafted this new version. The show had to be able to stand on its own, and that left the artists free to come up with a fresh visual approach.

"What we really wanted to do, both in the characters and locations, is really boil them down to their bare elements and try to make something that looked different," notes Bartleman. "Director J. Falconer and art director Josh Pong, who are both like rock stars, just kept working those designs over and over again. If you really stop and look at some of those backgrounds, you'll see that there are so few elements, but they're really cleverly done. We wanted it

to be cool and design-y, but stay away from retro. A lot of thought and not so much paint."

Bartleman and company were in awe of what Jay Ward was able to accomplish with limited animation and wanted to capture the same kind of magic with their 2D digital animation. He says, "We all learned a long time ago that you can do a lot without having to over-animate the hell out of it. If you pose it great and have strong designs, the show's really going to work well."

Classic Media's Evan Baily adds, "One of the things that's so brilliant about Jay Ward's stuff, and one of the reasons he has millions of fans to this day, is that there is an incredible spontaneity and looseness to his cartoons. There's so much planning, forethought and fussing over details that goes into animation that come out at the end with something that feels spontaneous is nothing short of miraculous. Look back at



Ward's stuff and you can see the fun they were having when they made it. We didn't want to lose that."

Baily says it was critical to preserve the timing inherent in Ward's productions and to play to the labor-saving tricks afforded by Flash animation, but it was also important that the new George didn't come off looking like a Flash show. He explains, "You don't want the audience to be thinking about how it's made, and if you see a digital asset kind of pivoting, then you're not watching the show, you're watching a digital asset pivoting. To me, great Flash animation looks like great traditional animation, and I think that's what George looks like."

Bartleman and the rest of the Studio B team knew they were on the right track when they got the thumbs-up from Ward, but even she knows that hard-core lovers of classic cartoons can be tough to win over with a new rendition. "It's wonderful to have fans that feel so attached to these characters that they're protective," she comments. "It's amazing how many people out there will go 'Wait a minute, this

isn't the Rocky & Bullwinkle or George of the Jungle I grew up with,' and don't want to see any changes. But I'm hoping it'll be well received."

This new George is sure to ruffle a few feathers among classic cartoon purists, but it's also guaranteed to forge a whole new legion of fans with its silly humor and absurd jungle hijinks. And we can be sure that this isn't the last time this gem is dusted off and polished to appeal to a new generation of kids. And for those who want to share the original series with their kids, a complete set will be released on DVD by Classic Media on Feb. 12.

The 1967 *George of the Jungle* was packaged with the cartoons *Tom Slick* and *Super Chicken*, which may be making a comeback as well. Bullwinkle Studios is also working with DreamWorks Animation on a feature film based on Jay Ward's Peabody's *Improbable History* for a holiday 2010 release and is in talks with NASCAR about developing a new *Tom Slick* animated series. ■

George of the Jungle airs Fridays at 7:30 p.m. on Cartoon Network.

Coming Soon from Studio B

In addition to *George of the Jungle*, the Toronto-based studio has two other hot new shows ready for 2008:

Kid vs. Kat. A young boy has to fight the evil schemes of a tiny, hairless creature of "insane malevolence and mysterious origin" in this clever new 26x22 animated series targeting audiences six to 11. The show will premiere on YTV in the fall. Developed internally at the studio, the series is based on Rob Boutilier's short, *Look What My Sister Dragged In*.



Martha Speaks. This 40x30 co-production with WGBH and TVO is based on the beloved book by Susan Meddaugh about a clever pooch whose appetite for alphabet soup gives her the gift of human speech—and teaches young viewers all kinds of new words in each episode.



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Say 'Ni Hao!' to Nick Jr.'s Newest Star

This February, Nick Jr. will debut *Ni Hao, Kai-Lan*, one of the sweetest things in children's edutainment to date: 20 half-hour episodes featuring the adventures of playful Chinese-American preschooler, Kai-lan Chow. Exec produced by toon veteran Mary Harrington (*Invader ZIM*, *Rugrats*, *Hey Arnold!*), the show follows Kai-lan and her pals Rintoo the tiger, Tolee the koala, Hoho the monkey and Lulu, the pink rhinoceros who travels by balloon, as they explore their world (a beautifully rendered pastoral locale, with geometric designs and fluid colors that are reminiscent of classical Chinese painting) and learn about the Mandarin language, Chinese culture and most importantly: their feelings. Kai-lan's grandfather, Yeye, is also there to help the youngsters understand the world and their emotions and to give them advice.

"I really wanted to portray a relationship of mutual respect," says Kai-lan's talented creator, Karen Chau. "In Chinese culture, the bringing together of young and old is one of our core values because there's so

much to learn from each other."

The egalitarian relationship between Kai-lan and Yeye is just one example of the way that Chinese cultural influence has been integrated into the show, along with things like Kai-lan's favorite food (dumplings), the lucky red and gold colors of the New Year and even the language. While the show's interactive aspects run along the familiar lines of *Dora the Explorer*, Nick took a different approach for language lessons. "There's more Chinese language actually placed in conversation," exec VP and creative director for Nickelodeon preschool, Brown Johnson, tells us—this in addition to target words that are focused on in each episode, which Chau notes was surprisingly difficult; "We tried to pick words that were familiar to that audience ... [Which was] kind of a challenge, because culturally when you're dealing with two different languages, there's two different settings. Even the word for 'ladybug' is not a word that's commonly used in Chinese households, but it is in American households."

Ni Hao, Kai-lan uses Chinese language and culture to educate and inspire.

by Mercedes Milligan

Building a language bridge between American and Chinese preschoolers wasn't the only challenge faced by *Ni Hao, Kai-lan*'s creative team. The way the show teaches children about emotions is a new frontier that required plenty of research and retooling. They worked with psychologists to understand how kids identify their feelings, and how to present tools kids can use to cope with them. "At Nick Jr., we always try to tackle a new curriculum that either no one has tackled before, or no one has tackled particularly well," says Johnson, "We really wanted to pick a new (which turned out to be incredibly difficult) path of 'emotional intelligence.' We tested as we went along, we kept changing it and changing it—that



Brown Johnson



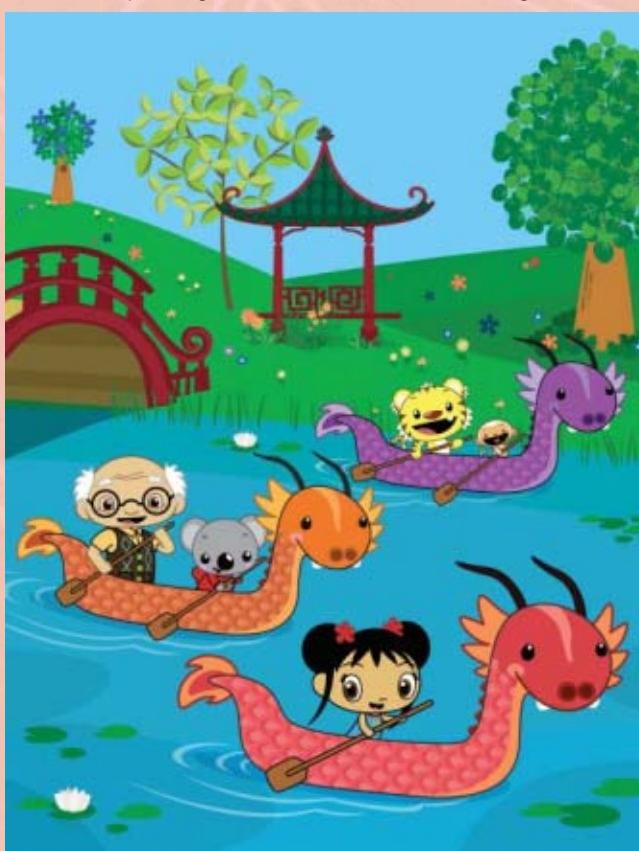
Karen Chau

first episode ["Dragon Boat Festival"] ... I think we were off schedule by eight or 10 weeks because we were really trying to get it right." She is quick to point out that this persistence has paid off, and that feedback from research with young audiences shows that kids are able to understand the situations and lessons experienced by the characters, a resonance that is crucial in getting audiences to empathize and learn from the show.

Benefiting the show's effort to connect with kids are the adorable "Asian Pop Art" influenced character designs created by Chau. "I come from the school of Hello Kitty," she jokes, but the truth of the statement is apparent in the doe-eyed, big headed, anime-esque characters that populate Kai-lan's world. The first drawing of Kai-lan popped out of Chau's head back in 2001 when she was working for a graphic design firm, learning Illustrator. But don't let the Flash-ready vector-based drawings fool you, *Ni Hao, Kai-lan* is traditionally animated (with help from Wang Films and Wang Studio in China). "Initially, we were thinking of doing it in Flash, and there were concerns ... There's something about doing something by hand that gives it more soul." "We can get a lot more expression and movement out of traditional animation," Johnson agrees. It's a refreshing opinion to hear while the industry is in the throes of a tech-crazy fever.

Making the series even more special are the elements borrowed from Chau's personal experiences both as a first generation Chinese-American and, perhaps more importantly, as a kid. When asked how the different animal characters were developed (we were surprised to see a koala and a rhino in a show that teaches Mandarin!), Chau reveals that they are (except for Rintoo) based on stuffed animals and make-believe friends she had as a child. Hoho, who is three years old in the show, is

actually Chau's 28-year-old stuffed monkey. She wanted to blend a sense of the magical intermingling of reality and imagination, as well as imbue her characters with childish quirks that would make them seem more interesting and alive, borrowing from her own childhood antics. "Tolee is a koala who has an identity crisis and wants to be a panda bear," Chau says, pointing out that Tolee wouldn't be caught



dead without his panda slippers. Then she laughs as she shares her inspiration: "I remember when I was little I always wanted to be a bear, so I would use permanent marker and put paws on my hands!" Another example is the red balloon that Lulu the rhino uses as transportation: "I think that every kid has a fascination with balloons because they are magical, in a way. To travel by balloon, I think, would be pretty awesome, so I just wanted to get that in there!"

Even the show's serene backgrounds were carefully developed to form a sense of harmony with the presentation of Chinese culture. Though Chau started out

placing Kai-lan in front of colorful, abstract backgrounds that melded into the pop-art aesthetic, the strategy of subtle integration that binds all the aspects of *Ni Hao, Kai-lan* together ended up playing a larger role than Chau's love of Hello Kitty designs. "When I first started drawing Kai-lan, in the back would be, like, flying gumballs or something!" Chau admits with a chuckle, "Then, when we got the show, we wanted to bring in the cultural aspects in a very subtle and organic way." Johnson's familiarity with preschool programming and insight into a child's viewing experience helped guide this development: "With the audience we have, I think it was important for us to create a sense of geography for kids, so that as they're watching they sort of know where they are and can recognize things like Kai-lan's house and where Tolee lives," she says, adding that the main goal was to create rich designs that incorporated Chinese-American culture in a fluid way.

Everything about *Ni Hao, Kai-lan* has been carefully arranged to balance the lessons in culture, language and friendship that the show seeks to promote; themes united by the underlying value of group harmony that is so important in Chinese culture, as well as a graphically beautiful design package and heart-warming use of traditional animation. "Growing up bicultural-

ly, it's sometimes very difficult because you're dealing with two different cultures, and at such a young age sometimes you have two different identities. I feel like Kai-lan is this really strong role model," Chau shares, "I think that Kai-lan is really 100 percent Chinese and 100 percent American." We hope this bundle of important lessons, wrapped up in a very cute package, will bring harmony and happiness to young viewers for a long time. ■

Ni Hao, Kai-lan premieres on Nick Jr. on Feb. 7 (Chinese New Year) at 11 a.m. You can also check out four new online games that launched on www.nickjr.com last month.



Cult of Personality

Using a sketch comedy format and more than 25 main characters, the new *Mr. Men Show* boldly goes where few other preschool toons have dared to roam!

by Ramin Zahed

The late British author and illustrator Roger Hargreaves may not be a J.K. Rowling-level household name, but people of a certain age will certainly remember his hugely popular *Mr. Men* books, which have sold over 100 million copies since they hit the scene in the early '70s. Those who have seen his brightly colored characters and enjoyed the wit and whimsy of his universe can see why they lend themselves so easily to animation.

Having already inspired two animated shows (one in 1974 by Flicks Films and another one by France 3 in 1995), the property makes a huge comeback this month with the debut of *The Mr. Men Show*, exec produced by Kurt Mueller and Chorion Silver Lining's Diana Manson. With top-notch Flash production delivered by Glendale, Calif.-based Renegade Animation and inspired sketch-comedy style scripts penned by veteran writers Kate Boutilier and Eryk Casemiro (*Rugrats*, *As Told By Ginger*, *The Wild Thornberrys*), it's not surprising that the new Chorion-produced show found a home so quickly on Cartoon Network in the U.S. and Channel Five in the U.K.

"The animation style is very much inspired by the old UPA classics, but the

color scheme is saturated, so that the color palette makes it look both retro and contemporary simultaneously," notes Mueller. "There are a lot of shows that go for the retro feel hook, line and sinker, but thanks to the efforts of our director, Mark Risley [*Rugrats*, *The Wild Thornberrys*], we were able to make something that harkens back to the source material, but also looks very new and modern."

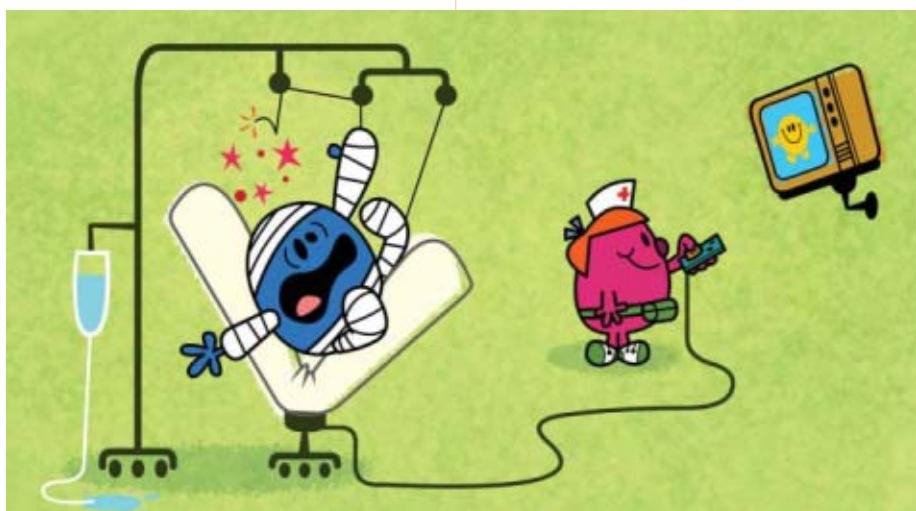
The timing seems to be perfect. About a year ago, the *Mr. Men* brand began to ride a new wave of popularity when 20-something paparazzi targets such as Britney Spears and Paris Hilton were spotted

around town wearing *Little Miss* T-shirts. Mueller believes the launch of the show will open up the brand to a much bigger, broader demographic in 2008.

Another reason the show stands out in the cluttered TV landscape is its mix-and-match episodic format, which is made up of mini-segments of varying lengths—an ideal package for online and mobile platform exposure. "When I got involved with the show about a year ago, Diana [Manson] had already brought on Eryk and Kate and they had devised this ingenious sketch comedy format which used 20-plus cherry-picked characters from this massive lineup of *Miss* and *Mr.* characters," notes Mueller. "They came up with a funny and inventive way to use these characters, while moving away from the moral-based stories of the individual books."

Billed as the first animated sketch comedy show for preschoolers, the series uses 10 to 11 modules of different lengths and packages the goods based on themes such as "inventions" or "dancing." "You can carve up the episodes in a gazillion ways and watch them on various broadband situations," explains Mueller. "We've worked on 52x11 or 450 sketches in the span of 12 months."

For Casemiro, who has many years of experience working on comedies such as *The Kids in the Hall* and popular kids toons such as *Rugrats*, *Rocket Power* and *As Told By Ginger*, Hargreaves' world proved to be





a glorious treasure trove of comedy. "In the *Mr. Men* and *Little Miss* world, you have some broad personalities based on behavioral traits," he says. "Good sketch comedy is basically opposite traits at conflict. The series also has a *Pokémon*-like quality in that the books focus on some 80 characters. We made some general realignments as the Little Misses in the original series were seen as too negative. We were also given a lot of room to make the show faster-paced and funnier than people usually expect in preschool series. We

weren't bogged down to fit a lot of curriculum, so we were free to emphasize the comedy."

Casemiro's partner, Boutilier agrees. "It's fun to stick with these characteristics and pair them up. They never change, grow or learn. They simply annoy each other. You have Mr. Stubborn

and Mr. Grumpy push each other's buttons. Miss Helpful and Mr. Bump, Miss Calamity and Mr. Tickle—you pair them up and you get disaster. We also didn't want the females to be the brats of the group. In a way, they are gender-neutral."

Boutilier says she's fortunate to have worked on many shows that she's loved, and this one is certainly one of them. "We all see a little bit of ourselves reflected in these characters, or we know people—our friends, our family, our co-workers—who remind us of these characters. In a way, the show reminds me a bit of *Rugrats*, as the characters on that series were also very well drawn. It's the kind of thing that is universal and fun."

The writers also credit art director Peter Michail for coming up with a cool restyling of the characters. "He made them much more animate-able, while preserving their original integrity," notes Casemiro. "He added a more contemporary styling. The original designs from the books were very simple and graphic. Peter gave them much more personality. You can look at



Kate Boutilier



Eryk Casemiro



Kurt Mueller

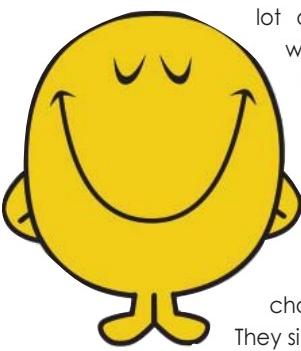
them and tell who they are instantly—and purists will be happy with what he preserved from the originals."

Both Boutilier and Casemiro point out that delivering the 26 half-hours in such a short time was their biggest challenge. "The new economics of children's television are something we had to deal with," says Casemiro. "Things have changed a lot since the days of *Rugrats*. But we love the immediacy of Flash animation. Renegade's technological system was fantastic. We kept the pieces on servers and you could just look at a piece of a sketch and give

some notes and have it revised. We used to send notes back to Korea in the old days, and you never knew what we were going to get back months later. Still, with Flash, some of the character movements, the axes on the screen, seem a bit more limited. You don't get as much camera movement and not as much in the axes flexibility area."

In the end, though, what kids will probably take away from the show will be its fun characters and amusing situations. "I always wanted to create children's programming that parents can watch with their kids without being bored," adds Casemiro. "We actually have a lot of double entendres in the sketches which parents can enjoy, while the younger viewers can take in the colors, the comedy and the music." With much luck, maybe somebody will explain the show's layered humor and deeper meanings to Paris Hilton and Britney Spears in the months ahead. ■

The *Mr. Men Show* premieres on Cartoon Network on February 4 at 9 a.m. The series will regularly air weekdays at 9 a.m. For more info, visit www.mrmen.com/us/.



Anicomm Awards 2008

As regular readers of this magazine know, TV commercials continue to be a promising playground for indie animators. Not that they ever went out of style, but everyone seems to agree that 2007 was a big watershed year for auteur-driven stop-motion, traditional and CG-animated spots. In many cases, these sharp, funny ads make the rest of the TV landscape seem really bland and predictable in comparison. Even if the writers' strike continues in the months ahead, we'll be happy just to watch these little short-attention-span theaters again and again.

First Place

Coca-Cola: Happiness Factory

Directors: Kylie Matulick and Todd Mueller; **Animation Company:** Psyop; **Advertising Agency:** Wieden + Kennedy, Amsterdam; **Executive Creative Director:** Al Moseley; **Exec Producer:** Justin Booth-Clibborn; **Creative Directors:** Rick Condos, Hunter Hindman.



accessible sense of warmth and fun, without having it become too cutesy or childish." Yup, we sure loved the warmth, the fun and the Pixar-quality animation, and kind of wish we all lived in a world like that!

Second Place

Hewlett Packard: Michel Gondry

Director: Olivier Gondry

Production Company: Partizan; **VFX Company:** Eight VFX; **Exec Producer:** Baptiste Andrieux; **Producer:** Marsi Frey; **Agency:** Goodby, Silverstein & Partners; **Creative Directors:** Rich Silverstein, Steve Simpson, Stephen Goldblatt.



(*The Science of Sleep*) talks about his creative mind and how he doesn't distinguish between dreaming in animation, stop motion or live action. It's an effective spot that moves smoothly between the helmer's colorful worlds. And guess what? The ad's catchy music is also composed by Michel. Sheesh! Some people are just way too talented for one medium.

Third Place

AT&T: Gingerbread

Director: Darren Robbie; **Production Company:** Aardman Animations; **Agency:** BBDO, New York and Atlanta.



Kudos: A perfect example of the quick wit and offbeat charm of Bristol-based Aardman Animation, this holiday spot featured a father-and-son gingerbread team (voiced by none other than Steve Buscemi and Norm McDonald) who have a sweet exchange before a human being takes a big bite out of their gingerbread house! Aardman crafted each scene individually, frame by frame, matching the mouth movements to the actors' dialog. The rigs were then removed (via Flame) and, voila, the spot was completed. Another triumph for Aardman became one of our favorite holiday gifts of 2007.

Our Sensational Seven

M&M's: Addams Family

Director: Kirk Kelley; **Animation:** LAIKA House; **Agency:** BBDO New York; **Chief Creative Officers:** David Lubars, Bill Bruce; **Exec Creative Director:** Susan Credle; **Art Director:** Rodney White.

Production Company: HSI Productions New York.



Kudos: Not a year goes by without LAIKA's teamo supremo delivering some clever eye candy for our mass consumption. So we weren't surprised to find out that the latest ghoulish incarnation of the M&M characters were animated by Kirk Kelley and his team at the Portland-based studio. Transmogrifying the candies to resemble the cast of *The Addams Family*

was a brilliant concept—who doesn't want to eat candy shaped like Gomez, Morticia, Pugsley, Wednesday and Uncle Fester? The ad's attention to detail and resemblance to the show's original actors is quite impressive (check out the decapitated head of Wednesday's doll!). They're creepy and they're kooky—and they'll melt in your mouth, not in your hands! Who could ask for more?

Orangina: Naturally Juicy

Directors: Todd Mueller and Kylie Matulick; **Animation:** Stink/Psyop; **Agency:** FFL Paris; **Exec Creative Directors:** Fred & Farid; **Exec Producers:** Daniel Bergman, Sylvaine Mella; **Animation Director:** Nicholas Weigel; **Post:** The Mill; **Producer:** Stephen Venning; **3D Producer:** Pip Malone.



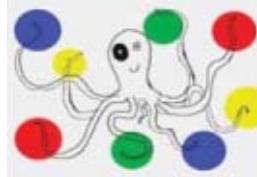
Kudos: "Is it weird that a hot deer turns me on?" That was one of the sly remarks we found on the blogosphere about this strange and super-sexy ad for French fizzy orange drink Orangina. Yes, the big guns are trying to go for the adult market with this hot number—which features, among other things a

lambada dancing bear, a pole-hugging flamingo stripper and octopus lap dancers. The depiction of jungle animals as CG-animated horn dogs is actually kind of disturbing, but like a horrible freeway car crash, it made our jaws drop. As Psyop creative director Todd Mueller points out, "I guess it goes without saying that when you get the opportunity to spray Orangina all over the chest of a sexy bunny girl, you go for it!"

Idaho Lottery: Twister

ACME Filmwork

Director: Chris Hinton; **Creative Directors:** Dennis Quatrone, Dennis Budell; **Producer:** Lisa Hawkes.



Kudos: Anyone who's followed the career of talented Canadian animator Chris Hinton (*Nibbles*, *Blackfly*, *CNote*) over the past decade was thrilled that his cool spot for the Idaho Lottery has already received much acclaim and an Annie Award nomination. We can never get enough of Hinton's smooth character-defining lines and wicked sense of humor. In this spot for the Idaho Lottery, he zeroes in on a character as he spins a wild tale to a blasé phone operator ... and every twist and turn in his story goes to Hintonian visual heights. It made us wish that Mr. Hinton was the personal chronicler of all our lives!

Sony Bravia: Play-Doh



Director: Frank Budgen; **Animation Director:** Darren Walsh; **Animation:** Passion Pictures; **VFX:** The Moving

Picture Co.; **Agency:** Fallon, London.

Production: Gorgeous Enterprises; **Producer:** Rupert Smythe.

Kudos: Stop-motion bunnies are an easy way to take a short-cut to viewers' hearts, but when you've got huge colorful ones moving about and interacting with New Yorkers on a typical day it requires a lot of effort, skill and co-ordination. A team of 52 professional and student animators braved a hot and humid nine-day stop-motion shoot in New York, following an eight-day rehearsal workshop. Given the fact that the director of this 90-second spot is none other than Passion Pictures' Darren Walsh—who created Angry Kid during his time at Aardman—it's not hard to imagine why this whimsical number is such a watchable experiment.

Sky Carbon Neutral Campaign: Cool Cat

Director: Richard Bazley; **Animation Company:** HRA; **Ad Agency:** WCRS; **Creative Directors:** Luke Williamson, Yan Elliot; **Background Artist:** Peter Moehrle; **Art Director:** Gethyn Davis; **Producer:** Charlotte Loynes; **Exec Producer:** Jerry Hibbert.



Kudos: In veteran animator Richard Bazley's brilliant spot for Sky's "Carbon-Neutral" campaign, a very retro-looking "cool cat" walks along the beautiful, verdant English countryside, jiving along to the upbeat music of Three Dog Nights' "Joy to the World." One quick look and the colors and the sweet homage to Fleischer toons goes straight to the heart of any animation lover. Bazley, who has worked on a slew of animated features in the past two decades—Who Framed Roger Rabbit, Iron Giant and Disney's Hercules, to name a few—pays tribute to a wide selection of artistic legends in this happy, shiny offering. Cool Cat is a brilliant amalgam of Felix the Cat, SpongeBob SquarePants and Steamboat Willie all rolled into one glorious multi-colored world! Someone, please, give that genius Bazley a TV series, FAST!

Goodman Fielder's Copperpot Dips: Real Ingredients

Director: Chris Hauge

Animation: Halo Pictures; **Producer:** Lisa Huage, Diana Burnett; **Agency:** Jack Watts Currie, Sydney; **Creative Director:** Colin Watts.



Kudos: Now that the faith-based VeggieTales folks have made a comeback on the big screen, it's funny to see their Aussie counterparts in a very grown-up commercial for dips. We liked the ad's realistic, yet slightly bizarre vision and wouldn't mind spending more time in the company of these down-under greens.

Virgin America: Safety Video

Director: Gordon Clark; **Animation Company:** W!LDBRAIN; **Agency:** Anomaly NYC; **Creative Director:** Mike Byrne; **Art Director:** Randy Freeman; **Producer:** Chris Whitney; **Exec Producer:** Andrea Mansour; **Design Director:** Nick Hewitt; **Digital Animators:** Mike Overbeck, Tim Blair; **CG Modeler:** Seryong Kim.



Kudos: This one is for all of us who get bored stiff listening to (or watching) the monotonous airline safety monologues before take-off. San Francisco house W!LDBRAIN, which also came up with the Annie nominated Esurance spots in 2007, offers a wry take on the subject, which features among other things a matador and his bull companion and a video-game-playing nun. The inspired short is the perfect example of turning the mundane into something marvelous. ■



ALL CREATURES WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

ILM and Tippett Studio join forces to create the magical world of *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. by Barbara Robertson

As wonderful as they are, until now, most fantasy films have missed something. "The whole fantasy genre happens in the past, or a particular period, or in Britain," says Mark Waters, who directed Nickelodeon Movies' *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. "Even in [Bridge to] Terabithia the creatures appeared in a dream sequence. But, what if the creatures were around us?"

What if, for example, they were hanging out in New England on the creepy Spiderwick Estate where, much to their dismay, nine-year old twins Jared and Simon Grace and their older sister Mallory have moved. Jared is the first to see a faerie, the house brownie Thimbletack, who appears inside the secret room where Jared finds great, great uncle Arthur Spiderwick's illustrated *Field Guide to the Fantastical World*. The field guide gives its owner power, which means the evil shape-shifting ogre Mulgarath and other nasty creatures want it, and

the children must keep it from them.

"The creatures are around them in the real world," says Waters. "They're mutations of creatures that could live here. That

"We had a good starting point with [book illustrator] Tony DiTerlizzi's designs. So, to make the characters seem like real animals, we assigned some kind of observable reference that we could pin to each, like frogs, salamanders, lizards. I invented the term 'biologize.' "

—Phil Tippett, animation supervisor, *The Spiderwick Chronicles*

makes it feel like it could happen to you."

The Paramount Pictures release, based on Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi's popular book series of the same name, compresses five books into one super-sized arc. Many of the faerie creatures from the books appear in the film, but not all, and one, the troll, walked out of the wa-

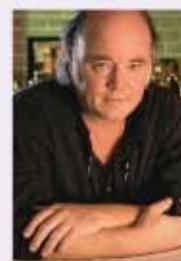
ter and became terrestrial due to the filming locations.

Tippett Studio and Industrial Light & Magic created the creatures, which appear in the film's 500 visual effects shots. In fact, a modeler at Tippett helped that studio land the job by creating one of the creatures in his downtime.

"Sven Jensen was learning Mudbox, and he thought the goblin was a cool little creature that would be fun to

build," says Blair Clark, co-visual effects supervisor with Joel Friesch at Tippett. When the studio rigged the model in Maya, animators started doing animation studies with it.

"We had a disgruntled little goblin on a pedestal basically staying alive, but well within character," Clark says. "We gave him crunchy food items and a microphone and put some sound on it." At the time, Tippett was still working on *Charlotte's Web*, another Paramount film, so people from the studio showed their goblin to Paramount. Clark remembers the reaction: "Mark [Waters] said, 'That's amazing. No direction and he's pretty



much good to go.'"

At the beginning of the project, Tippett Studio founder Phil Tippett, who acted as animation supervisor and character designer for the film, helped organize the visual effects work. "We broke it up very early in terms of the types of shots and numbers of characters each studio would do," he says.

Tippett Studio took the goblins, Red Cap (a bull-goblin), Hogsqueal (a hob-goblin), the troll and some of the shapes into which Mulgarath shifts. ILM created Mulgarath, the sprites, Thimbletack, Byron the griffin and the sylphs.

For the most part, each studio designed the creatures they created, although Tippett worked on initial designs for Thimbletack. The two studios shared 30 shots.

"We had a good starting point with Tony's designs," says Phil Tippett, referring to illustrations in the books. "So, to make the characters seem like real animals, we assigned some kind of observable reference that we could pin to each, like frogs, salamanders, lizards. I invented the term 'biologize.'"

Similarly, ILM's art director, Christian Alzmann, whose crew of seven concept artists created 500 pieces of art, 10 characters and seven environments, looked to the field guide and to nature. The griffin is a classic half-eagle, half-lion; the sprites transform from their camouflage as flowers into delicate insect-like creatures and Mulgarath is a cross between a bull, a goat and a tree.

On location, Phil Tippett, working with ILM vfx supervisor Pablo Helman, acted as an onset choreographer for the CG creatures. "I was most concerned with what the reaction of the live-action actors would be to the creatures," Tippett says. "It was important to get the eye lines and the timing beats."

For example, during one sequence Mallory (Sarah Bolger) fights invisible goblins until she's tossed a "seeing stone," and then the nasty little creatures become visible. "We came up with a hunting strategy for the



goblins," says Tippett. "As they move on Sarah, they surround her."

Once the film moved into postproduction, Clark, Friesch and animation supervisor Todd Labonte took charge at Tippett Studio leaving Phil Tippett free to concentrate on continuity. At ILM, Tim Alexander organized and supervised the visual effects crew with Tim Harrington acting as animation supervisor.

Two of ILM's characters have speaking roles: The evil Mulgarath (Nick Nolte) and Thimbletack (Martin Short), who is a good house brownie until he isn't and then he transforms into a green, mean boggart. "We had rigging challenges for the transformation and also for the griffin's wings and tail," says Alexander. "And we also changed our facial system."

ILM's new facial animation system gives modelers and animators cut and paste tools for blocking in facial expressions quickly without sacrificing capability. With a tool called "Face Select," animators can control particular muscles. "The big win is that we can quickly create models, change proportions and do animation tests," says Harrington. For rigging, a system dubbed "Block Party" made it possible to remap skeletal structure and muscles from one creature to another.

At Tippett, a primary challenge centered on the visible/invisible goblin sequence. "We knew we'd have to

deal with magical barrier effects and sell the fact that the creatures were invisible," says Russell Darling, CG supervisor. "We had everything set up for footprints in grass and mud. And then we discovered we had 97 shots of invisible creatures walking through dead leaves." The crew solved that problem with CG

leaves, wet ones that stuck to surfaces and dry leaves that the goblins kicked in the air. To make the goblins materialize, lead technical director Erin Borland developed a special RenderMan shader.

Todd Labonte supervised the 28 animators at Tippett who orchestrated the goblin battle. "We talked about doing a crowd system, but when you have only 15 or 16 goblins, you can watch each one and see if one is doing the same thing as another," he says. So, they had to be hand animated by multiple animators working on one shot. "Everyone had to jump in and it was hard. The scenes were exhausting."

Exhausting, but rewarding. After all, the crew had created the goblin that got them the job out of their own enthusiasm. "We do so much cute furry stuff at Tippett, and it's fun to make appealing stuff," Labonte says. "But a lot of us got into special effects to do dragons and things that eat people. When you read about the goblins in the field guide, that they jab broken glass into their gums because they don't have teeth, you go, 'Oh. We've got to get this movie!'"

From beautiful flower sprites and dandelion-seed sylphs created at ILM to Tippett's troll, from ILM's ogre Mulgarath to Tippett's con-artist hobgoblin and from ILM's transforming trickster Thimbletack to Tippett's goblins, the combined efforts of the two visual effects studios have created a family film . . . with teeth. ■

Paramount/Nickelodeon Films' *The Spiderwick Chronicles* opens in theaters nationwide on February 14.





Adventures in Triumphant Teleporting

Doug Liman, Kevin Elam and Joel Hynek create a cool world where you can don't need to put up with the ugly realities of modern airlines to travel from one geographic location to the next. *by Ron Magid*

They wanted a jump, not a jump cut. The new sci-fi feature *Jumper*, in which a genetic anomaly allows certain humans to teleport themselves anywhere—across the room or around the world—demanded a vision that would make the act of jumping both matter-of-fact and cool. Director Doug Liman and visual effects producer Kevin Elam, who last teamed on *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, knew the film would contain hundreds of jump effects, and were concerned about how to keep the last as fresh as the first. They brought in an expert—Mike Fink, who had created the remarkable Nightcrawler “Bampf!” effect in *X2*—but he left to pursue *The Golden Compass*. An earlier choice, *Gladiator*'s John Nelson, left over creative differences, so Elam wanted to find

a visual effects supervisor who could jump in sync with Liman. He called his mentor, Joel Hynek. The choice couldn't have been more fortuitous.

Not only had Hynek created cutting edge visuals for the Oscar-nominated *Predator* and the Oscar-winning *What Dreams May Come*, he also brought a physicist's passion to the project, which explores the war between those who jump—Davey (Hayden Christensen) and Griffin (Jamie Bell)—and Paladins like Roland (Samuel L. Jackson) sworn to destroy them in a war that has been raging for thousands of years. “I love physics and majored in it for awhile,” says Hynek, who previously brought his flight expertise to *Stealth* and his skiing talents to *xXx*.

As the effects team took shape—ultimately including WETA, Hydraulx, Lola, Riot,

Illusion Arts, Pixel Playground, Digiscope and Sandbox—Hynek and Elam faced their first challenge: determining what exactly a “jump” looked like. Hynek brought a knowledge of String Theory and *Star Trek*'s transporter effect to bear. “The question was, are they going through a tunnel or does a window suddenly open up say between New York and Seattle?” Hynek wondered. The answer was two “strings” of parallel time/place touching. “The idea was that space was folding like a wormhole with no depth. Stepping through, the jumper went instantly from one place into another.”

The speed and matter-of-factness of the concept tickled Liman. After defining the five types of jumps—departures, arrivals, first person POVs, camera follow-throughs with characters and local jumping, where the jumper appears in different places in the same locale in the same shot—the director insisted on mixing it all up. “The book, that became the script, required that the jumps be different,” Hynek says. “We decided there were four factors that affected a jump: the jumper's skill level, their emotional state, the difficulty of the jump and its intent.”

One of the eeriest jumps is the local,

continued on page 38

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Jumper

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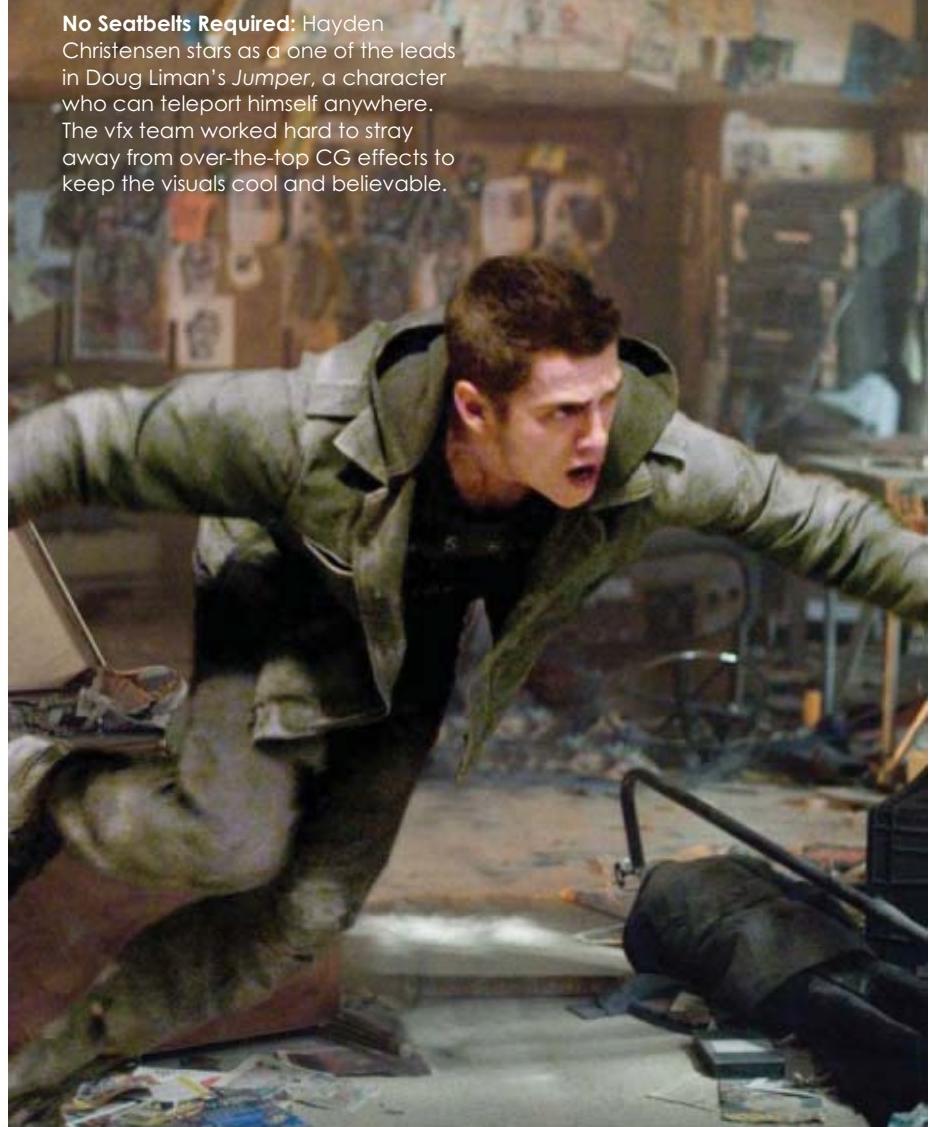
where the same jumper can disappear from one place in a room and reappear just a few feet away—multiple times. Davey uses them as he's watching TV to jump to the refrigerator and back without missing a beat, but the more advanced Griffin can use it to tag-team when fighting a Paladin. As a motion-control camera pans or dollies across the room, Jamie Bell and several stunt Griffins would attack a single actor playing a Paladin from several different spots in one continuous action. Second unit director Simon Crane and stunt choreographer Wade Eastwood created the scene this way in order to maintain continuity in the action. "We'd have four 'Griffins' in a fight scene to get the action to really flow," Elam says. "In post we would 'rub out' the other Griffins so it appeared that the action was continuous."

But it wasn't just Paladins Elam and Hynek were fighting. They were also fighting geography. "The whole movie is an exercise in clean plates and digitally rebuilding sets," Elam says. "We only shot motion control in a few places using Mo-Sys, a simple setup involving a dolly track with pan and tilt. Doug likes lots of handheld camera moves."

While Hynek was around to shoot plates, he was forced to leap onto *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* just as production wrapped, leaving Elam and visual effects producer Ellen Somers to finish *Jumper*. Fortunately, they'd brainstormed many concepts jointly, did the original tests together, and saw how Liman's take on the jumps changed during production. "Doug didn't want it to feel like the characters were in some fantasy or superhero picture," Elam says. "The tone became more real the more we shot, and we wanted to stay away from a science fiction movie feel."

One of the more interesting ideas was the use of a still-camera array, similar to that used for *The Matrix*'s infamous bullet-time shots, only here the intent was to make the jumper disappear in an instantaneous collapsing blur. "For what we called Combat Jumps, the image rapidly collapsed from the outer edges into the center, enveloping the jumper," says Elam. Adding a vacuum-like effect enhanced the jump's power. "Doug and Joel always wanted to see how the jump affected the environment, so sand or water or dust would be

No Seatbelts Required: Hayden Christensen stars as a one of the leads in Doug Liman's *Jumper*, a character who can teleport himself anywhere. The vfx team worked hard to stray away from over-the-top CG effects to keep the visuals cool and believable.



"For what we called Combat Jumps, the image rapidly collapsed from the outer edges into the center, enveloping the jumper. Doug [Liman] and Joel [Hynek] wanted to see how the jump affected the environment."

—*Jumper* vfx producer Kevin Elam

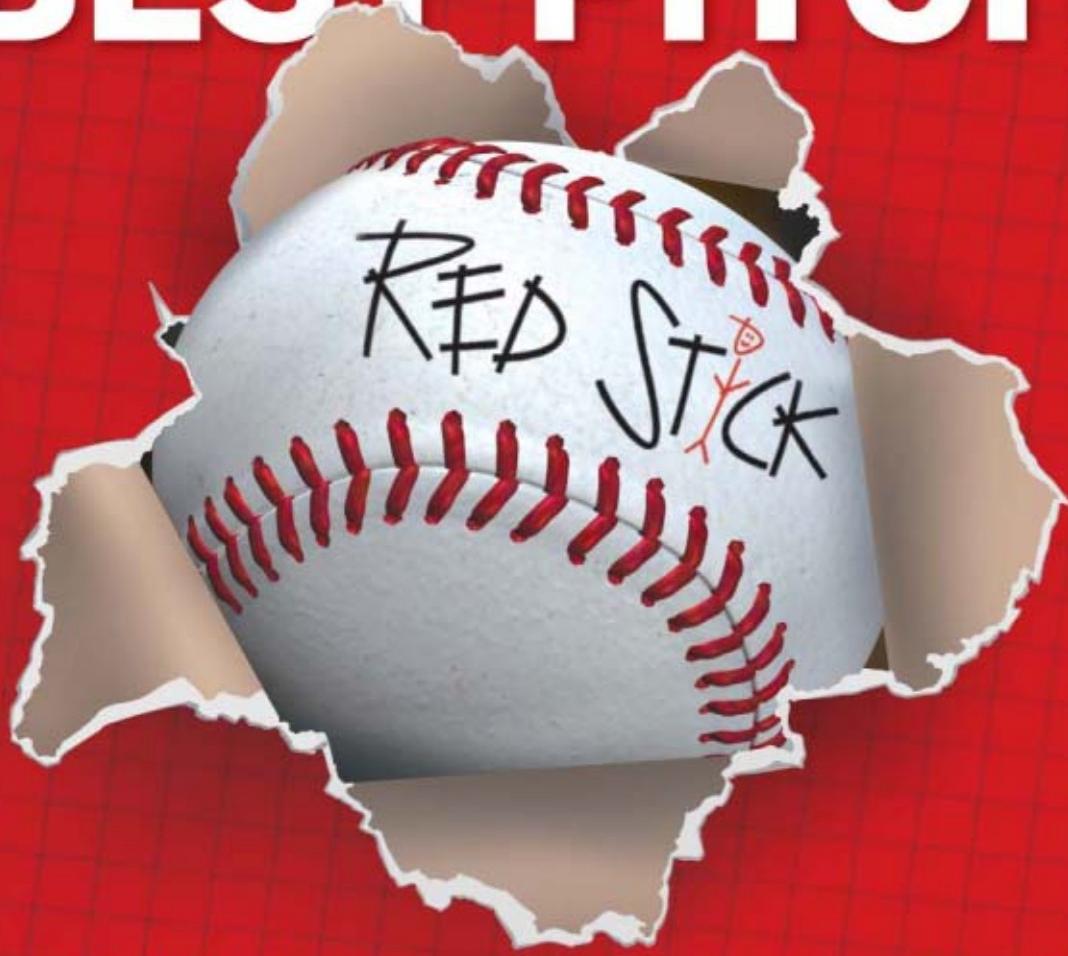
sucked up and objects in the area would fall down."

When jumpers first learn to use their talents, they can be very destructive—after they learn to control their teleportation powers, they can selectively choose to wreck things with devastating effect—and even "jump" objects with them. "There's a pretty crazy battle between Roland and Griffin, an advanced jumper who ends up teleporting a double-decker bus from London to the Sahara desert," Elam reveals. "The bus teleports into thin air over the desert, then rolls like a yo-yo and impacts a sand dune near Roland."

When Elam and Hynek learned that special effects supervisor Yves De Bono planned to achieve the effect practically instead of using CG, they were thrilled. "We had the opportunity to do it for real, so we said, 'Why not?'" Elam says. "Our role was the teleportation effect of the bus coming in, lots of rig clean up and compositing Sam Jackson into the shot. For Doug, it's always about supporting the story, and not about making eye candy shots." ■

Twentieth Century Fox's *Jumper* opens wide in U.S. theaters on February 14.

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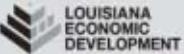
Isabelle Carrière • Acting Acquisitions and Sales Manager, Trade Media.

Jocelyn Hamilton • Vice President of Content, Corus Kids Television

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Digital Magic

by Christopher Grove



Future Phones, Cool Kites and Creature Comforts

CES: Bigger Not Always Better

When people ask me what I thought about this year's edition of the Consumer Electronics Show, I tell them it looked much like CES 2007, 2006, 2005 and so on. Banks of high-def TV monitors (last year 103 inches, this year 150 inches, next year a hectare?), bigger and cheaper data storage and ever-thinner portable computers. More often than not, tech companies introduce a new technology only to keep "introducing" it for the next few years. Enough about the potential of WiMAX, already. As one CES observer says, "The nascent technology has yet to prove itself in real world scenarios and many companies remain skeptical about whether it can ever take off."

But, nonetheless, there are some tech products that will have an increasing impact on the animation business. For example, the Swedish-made cell phone Neonode N2 is a totally unlocked GSM phone that'll make it easier than ever to watch media on cell-phone screens and, in this case, from multiple sources. Right now it retails for \$700, but experts are predicting that, once picked up by a stateside carrier, the price will drop significantly.

Also, as un-sexy at it is, the burgeoning number and quality of wireless technology options for computers and peripherals will make the designing of the ultimate workspace a snap. Belkin's FlyWire device, for example, can send HDMI signals up to 100 feet through walls. The company says it's working on a hub that'll support multiple streams of high def data flow. The CES version of the technology should be available this summer for about \$600. If you're into the Feng Shui of your workspace the absence of a spaghetti mess of wires is a good way to start.

CafeFX Flies a Kite

One of the best, unintended consequences of high-end broadband technology is the ability for content creators to untether themselves from the Los Angeles, New York, Vancouver orbit and still stay relevant and competitive. Such is the case with Santa Maria, Calif.-based CafeFX (*Spider-Man 3*, *Pan's Labyrinth*), whose work is featured in Paramount Classic's current release *The Kite Runner*. The shop's impressive work has been nominated for a VES (Visual Effects Society) Award for Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Motion Picture.

Adapted from the internationally best-selling novel by Khaled Hosseini, the book-to-film transition posed a challenge similar to any book with a narrator at its core. Because of this, the film's visual elements as a means to the audience's understanding of place, history, culture and emotion becomes critical. For its part, CafeFX created a virtual Kabul, Afghanistan, seen decades apart in history, as well as the film's beautiful kite-fighting sequences.

Due to the danger of filming in Afghanistan the film was shot in Kashgar, a city in China's western desert bordering Afghanistan. CafeFX visual effects supervisor David Ebner accompanied director Marc Forster (*Finding Neverland*, *Monster's Ball*) and his crew during 30 days of the shoot in China. Visual effects production at CafeFX, meanwhile, was supervised by visual effects producer Les G. Jones.

The simple beauty of the kite flying sequences provide the film's most lyrical moments, conveying the joyfulness of life before the Soviet invasion and oppression in the Taliban era. In traditional kite-fighting tournaments, children compete by slicing through the strings of their opponents. A world-renowned Afghani kite fighting champion was consulted for his invaluable knowledge of kite construction, as well as flying techniques and strategies. The kites in these sequences were all computer generated by CafeFX, as are the background skies and much of the city of Kabul. Animators paid great attention to details of texture and lighting and also built the physics of kite flying—wind, string interactions, flutter and more.

A customized lighting and compositing system was designed by compositing lead Robin Graham to control the look of the kites, allowing the paper-thin kites to be seen from all lighting angles in relation to the sun. A virtual camera flies under, over and around the twirling kites, with many seen from every angle in the same shot. In order to have proper backlight, front light and raking light, CafeFX rendered multiple lighting passes as well as color isolation mattes, giving final control to the compositing process.

Peter Griffin: Digital Pioneer?

While the studios continue to refuse to even think about giving writers eight cents per-download, they continue to move forward with deals to promote the use of digital delivery of content via broadband.

At MacWorld 2008, for example, Twentieth Century Fox and Apple announced Digital Copy for iTunes, which provides customers who purchase a DVD with an additional digital copy of the movie. As with movies purchased from the iTunes Store, an iTunes Digital Copy can be transferred to iTunes and then viewed on a PC, Mac, video iPod, iPhone or Apple



DIGITAL COPY

TV. The first DVD to make its debut with iTunes Digital Copy is the Special Edition DVD premiere of *Family Guy's Star Wars* parody. Fox and Apple are planning to deliver many more DVDs with iTunes Digital Copy this year.

"One of the most requested features DVD buyers have been asking for is the ability to get the movies they bought into their iTunes library," says Jim Gianopoulos, chairman and chief executive officer of Fox Filmed Entertainment. "We're thrilled to offer such an incredibly simple way for our customers to get even more out of their DVD purchase." Great. Now if they can just explain why giving the creator/writers of the content less than a dime a download will "destroy the business," we'll all be happy!

Creature Credits

Some of Los Angeles-based Imaginary Forces' latest work will soon be seen in Paramount Pictures and Nickelodeon Movies' feature film, *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (opening nationwide February 14). In addition to creating and producing the film's prologue, the filmmakers hired IF to produce two key flashback sequences, the whimsical end titles and the film's teaser trailer. The work was designed and directed by IF creative director Ahmet Ahmet and produced by IF's Kathy Kelehan.

"I can't imagine [the film] without the incredible contribution Imaginary Forces made to three crucial

Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry



Toon Boom's Digital Pro

Encapsulating all the features of Toon Boom's latest Digital Pro release in this small space is going to be as tough as keeping Britney out of the tabloids this month. After all, Digital Pro contains every stage of the animation process from story to final rendering (up to 10K) with all of the necessary tools such as exposure sheets, true 3D multi-plane techniques, ink



and paint, etc. Plus, it all comes in one package.

One of the release's biggest selling points is its paperless 2D animation

pipeline, where you do all of the drawings and animation directly on the computer, preferably with a Wacom Cintiq (see last month's review). Since Digital Pro handles both bitmap and vector-based images, artists can work in both formats, very much like Flash, only better! Each pencil stroke is converted into a vector line, retaining crisp edges at any resolution, which can then be animated or onion-skinned for the more original approach of drawing a new image for each frame. Traditionally trained animators will also love the fact that a lot of old-school terminology (remember peg systems, fields, etc.?) has been retained in this release.

It also looks like Toon Boom has taken a cue from Adobe's Creative Suites and incorporated similar interfaces across the board so that migrating from Storyboard Pro to Toon Boom Studio to Digital Pro isn't a struggle. They've also utilized the Adobe-ish docking palettes to allow users to organize their work areas in a cleaner fashion.

Also, Digital Pro has an inverse kinematics system, which is normally reserved for complex 3D character animation rigs. It works the same way in the 2D envi-

sequences," says director Mark Waters. "Ahmet and Kathy and their team added texture and nuance and mystery in a way that really sucks the audience

ronment. In essence, characters can be rigged with connecting pieces (hands to arms to body for instance), and if you animate the hand, the rest of the system remains connected and follows the hand animation. I don't see it working well for full animation, but for limited animation and things like walk cycles, it could really speed things up. I enjoy it when really complex ideas are used for simple problems!

Overall, this software is really potent and perfect for animation production on a large scale. At \$3K, it's still less than most 3D packages and is totally accessible for those who are good with a pencil and prefer the 2D route over the current trend of 3D animation—which is something I can always get behind. After all, when it comes to animation, the medium doesn't really matter if you have a good story. Right?

Website: www.toonboom.com/products/digitalpro

Price: \$2,999.99

Kolor's Autopano Pro v1.4

Stitching together individual photographs into one large collage is a process that's been around for a long time. Yes, it even goes back to the days before computers took over. The idea has numerous applications in the post-production world: It can be used to make one long pan-able image, create an environment sphere or cube for reflections in a CG object, deliver High-Dynamic Range images to be used for global illumination and lighting a CG scene and to generate Flash and Quicktime VRs for virtual walkthroughs. In any case, the process usually requires taking many pictures at different angles from the same point in space. These shots should overlap one another so that they share information along the edges. The process was really quite tedious when working in Photoshop or similar programs because the lens used for panoramas is generally wide and causes distortion in the images. Therefore, lining up

into the world of *Spiderwick*."

The suspenseful opening sequence takes the audience back 80 years to the secret study of Arthur

the images becomes a difficult task.

There have been a number of programs to help this process. French company Kolor has come up with a new version of their Autopano Pro (v1.4) tool, which delivers a few more bangs for the buck. I was happy to discover that the blending features are really well put together with enough editing control that you can go in and fix the errors that the computer didn't find. Luckily, in my tests, I didn't need to do anything manually. The software analyzes the image directory and will detect the ones with similarities and automatically do a rough stitch. I was really quite impressed. The process took a while to wrap up on my sequence, but I was using 4K CR2 raw files, so it was processing a whole lot of data.

On top of the general stitching, AutoPano will correct color and exposure between photos. It can detect and remove "ghosting"—elements that moved or appeared between photos. And it will handle many different kinds of fish-eye lenses, which are the most problematic images in this process. Furthermore, it can import many image formats including HDR formats. It handles multi-processors, operates at eight or 16 Bits and allows three projection modes.



All in all, AutoPano is an incredibly helpful tool, and it's reasonably priced to boot. Large studios can benefit from the high-tech quality and features, while home studio users can use the features for day-to-day needs such as putting together a Quicktime VR of their rental unit on Craigslist or pretending to be the next David Hockney on their MySpace page.

Website: www.autopano.net

Price: \$145 (99 euros) ■

Todd Sheridan Perry is the co-owner of Max Inc Café and an award-winning visual effects supervisor. He's currently working as senior lighting technical director on the Wachowski brothers' upcoming summer release, *Speed Racer*. If you have tech product review suggestions for him, you can email him at ducky@maxinkproductions.com.

Spiderwick. For the two-day prologue shoot at Paramount, Ahmet collaborated with renowned DP Caleb Deschanel.

"[I]F brought great ideas and a wonderful visual and rhythmic sense to all the sequences they created," says Deschanel. "They worked with Mark to develop the storylines and then found powerful visuals to get those ideas across. The end titles make you want to stay to the very last note of the movie—clever and fun." ■

Chris Grove is a Los Angeles-based journalist and actor. If you have ideas for his monthly column, you can email him at cwjg@earthlink.net.

Otherworldly Visuals: Imaginary Forces delivered the teaser trailer, the cool credits and two key flashback sequences for Paramount's fantasy *The Spiderwick Chronicles*.

BASED ON THE BOOKS BY
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AND HOLLY BLACK





Machinima for Theater: Interactive animation created for Adam Rapp's play *Stone Cold Dead Serious* (NYC, 2007) is used in Gauthier's program.

NYU Tisch Targets Asia

by Ellen Wolff

When film fans think of New York University-trained filmmakers, they're likely to picture Martin Scorsese or Spike Lee shooting movies in Manhattan. But a new view of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts is emerging—and it's in Singapore. Tisch Asia is already offering a Master of Fine Arts program in film production, and this fall its MFA curriculum in Animation and Digital Arts will begin. Headed by Vice Dean Pari Shirazi, Tisch Asia is operating in a 40,000 square-foot facility in central Singapore that contains sound stages and theaters as well as animation and editing labs and a film library.

The two-year Animation and Digital Arts program has been developed under the leadership of Jean-Marc Gauthier, an interactive artist who's on the Animation and Digital Arts faculty at Tisch's NYC campus. He's also the author of *Creating Interactive 3D Actors and their Worlds and Virtual Sets*

and *Pre-visualization for Games, Movies and the Web*. Given his background, it's not surprising that the new curriculum will have a broad focus.

"We want to go towards applications of animation that are not just traditional animation, but the whole range—which tends to be much more diverse than even 20 years ago," he explains. "We want to explore new venues in interactivity and the different uses of animation, whether it's for cell



Back to the Basics: Jean-Marc Gauthier's course illustrates how to animate simple objects, create hand-drawn animations, stop-motion projects and use other media such as video, kinetic sculptures, light, photographs, text and graphics in the context of animation.

phones or theme parks."

Considering the rising profile of Singapore—with the presence of Electronic Arts and George Lucas' animation company—it seems like a natural expansion for NYU. Gauthier notes that SIGGRAPH Asia chose Singapore for its December 2007 gathering, and he hopes that the animation scene there will lead to internships for Tisch students. "Ours will be the first MFA animation program there," he says. "Most of what has been offered is more on the undergraduate level. There's a huge demand now for students who have competence in storytelling and conceptual ideas and not just technical execution, and this program will try to address that."

Scientific visualization is also an important focus of the curriculum, because Gauthier sees career opportunities increasing in that field. "For example, if we think about bringing robotics into our lives we definitely have to think about how those things move—from an animator's point of view and not only from an engineering perspective. Industrial design is one field where complex ideas are being defined through animation."

As a result, the MFA program will include scientific visualization as part of its second-year coursework. However, Gauthier stresses that first-year MFA courses will emphasize fundamentals. "I expect to have at least some students who know too much about computers, so we're going back to the basics and studying motion by observation—maybe without computers."

Another cornerstone of the Tisch Asia animation program will be an emphasis on collaborative projects. As Gauthier sees it, "The master's thesis class will be organized like a production course. I'm trying to build something dynamic that encourages collaboration. Personally, I don't like to see a student trying to do a 'big masterpiece' and never recover from it. A thesis project

continued on page 44

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Opportunities**continued from page 42**

is just one step in the career of a student."

Gauthier hopes to foster collaboration by having students work in clusters and not at static workstations. To that end, Tisch Asia will offer a "lending library" of laptops that are loaded with software like Autodesk Maya, Adobe Flash and Virtools, along with NVIDIA graphics cards.

In addition to designing the program, Gauthier is involved in selecting an inaugural class of 32 MFA candidates, which he expects will be divided into two teams of student collaborators. "We're trying to create groups of complementary people in terms of their skills and interests. We want these students to become super-communicators of their ideas. I'm an architect by training, and architecture is very similar to animation in the sense that you can sketch something on a napkin and have people working later on that sketch. I want them to realize the scalability of what they can do."

It will be interesting to see where Tisch Asia will draw its students from,

since Gauthier reports that half of the students for last fall's Film Production MFA program came from the U.S.

Faculty for the program will include teachers from NYU's Manhattan school, but Gauthier hopes to invite animation experts from Asia as well. "The idea is not to duplicate what's



"I expect to have at least some students who know too much about computers, so we're going back to the basics and studying motion by observation—maybe without computers."

—Jean-Marc Gauthier



in New York. We don't want to make the mistake of doing a 'franchise' in Asia. It's an opportunity to define what could be the next step for an animation school."

Gauthier is optimistic that Tisch Asia can realize these ambitious plans. "It's a

global vision," he admits. "But I have an intuition that students will be interested in learning animation in Singapore. They think it's where the future lies." ■

Ellen Wolff is a Los Angeles-based journalist who specializes in visual effects, CG animation and education.



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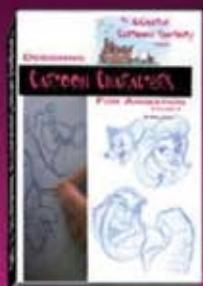
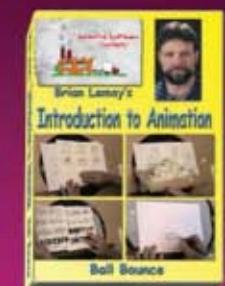
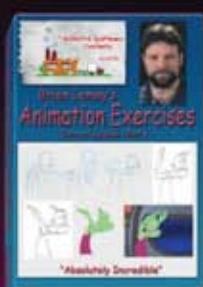
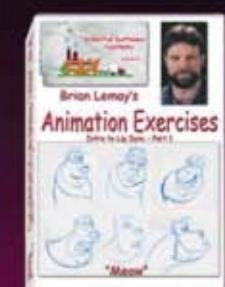
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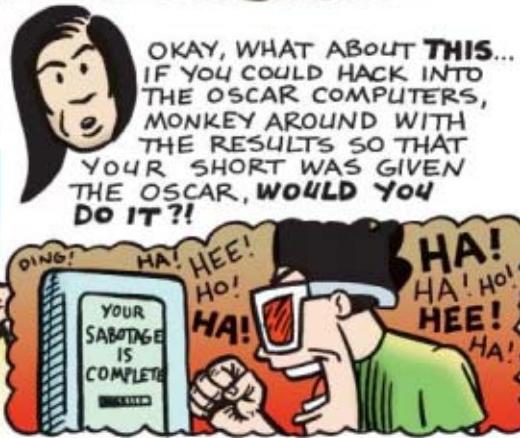
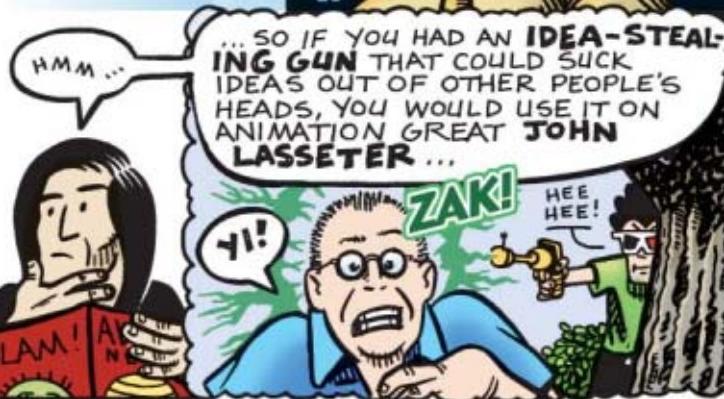
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